

STRATEGIES OF UNITY WITHIN
THE ACHAEAN LEAGUE

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ABSTRACT

The Achaean League successfully extended its membership to poleis who did not traditionally share any affinity with the Achaean *ethnos*. This occurred, against the current of traditional Greek political development, due to a fundamental restructuring of political power within the poleis of the Peloponnesus. Due to Hellenistic, and particularly Macedonian intervention, most Peloponnesian poleis were directed by tyrants who could make decisions based on their sole judgments. The Achaean League positioned itself to directly influence those tyrants. The League offered to maintain the tyrants within their poleis so long as they joined the League, or these tyrants faced relentless Achaean attacks and assassination attempts. Through the consent of this small tyrannical elite, the Achaean League grew to encompass most of the Peloponnesus.

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Map of Central Greece and the Peloponnese

INTRODUCTION

The Achaean League's historical significance lay in its unique political structure which managed to unite most of the poleis within the Peloponnesus into one government. For over a century, the Achaean political system incorporated a number of notoriously fractious Hellenic poleis. The Achaeans achieved such a feat through aggressive and dynamic strategies of unity. These strategies were political programs of foreign and domestic content with social consequences. Leading Achaean statesmen made policy choices which helped define how Achaeans were perceived by themselves and outsiders.

The main obstacle to the union of so many poleis was the large stock individual Greeks put into their local polis as the definer of their self-identity. When the autonomy of one's city holds a central place in one's self-worth, the ability to effectively unite with a larger confederation becomes nearly impossible. The Achaean political system had the task of appeasing enough of that particularistic sentiment in enough of its individual citizen members. But at the same time it had to maintain sufficient coercive power to act as an effective government. The balancing act, though difficult, was eased through the circumstances of the Hellenistic period.

Quite naturally, over the course of the tumultuous Hellenistic period the strategies varied according to the specific circumstances and general *zeitgeist*. One may detect broad trends, however, which divide the Achaean League's Hellenistic period into two

eras. On the one hand there is the early period, which was characterized by dominating individuals. The most notable among them was Aratus of Sicyon. In a world full of tyrants, the focus of Achaean politics was on the supreme elites within the various poleis. The League grew and maintained itself on the acquiescence of the tyrant class of Hellas, those individuals and families who disproportionately benefited from the influx of wealth after the death of Alexander. By presenting the choice of the possibility of supreme office in a greater polity or targeted political assassination, the League gained many new adherents. This general focus worked well for several decades, but the Cleomenean War (229-222 BCE) exposed the fragile nature of this unity.

The ejection of Macedonian power, after the seizure of the Acrocorinth, had changed the political dynamics in unanticipated ways. Most Hellenic tyrants had local support structures; it would be impossible to govern for long without them. However, they also relied on the implicit and sometimes explicit promise of Macedonian military aid to maintain their positions of power. These elites of the tyrant class remained in charge of their polities, even as they joined their cities to the League. The Achaeans attempted to serve a similar role to the Macedonians in the Peloponnese, yet lacked the same military resources. When challenged by Cleomenes III, the self-interested loyalty of the supreme elites from the newly joined poleis did not hold the League together. Only the reintroduction of outside military power from Macedonia and later Rome gave the League the space to continue its developments as a federation.

After a period of transition, the Achaean League emerged as a dependent protectorate of their former enemy. The Cleomenean War and its aftermath proved to be the fulcrum after which, the League refocused its strategies upon a broader swath of the

Achaean citizenry. The shared federal rights to movement, property and intermarriage became increasingly important to binding more individuals to the concept of a federal citizenship. These rights had existed in the early League, but only the supreme political elites had the economic ability and desire to take advantage of them.

A growing sense of Achaean political identity allowed for greater attempts to forge national institutions. The greatest expression of citizenship, the army, was standardized in this period under the leadership of Philopoemen. The renewed focus on a broader base of the League's population was made possible through the assistance of a protecting power of first, Macedonia, and then, Rome. As the benefits of association became manifest to a greater swath of the League's citizens, the onerous burdens of the state lightened under foreign tutelage. These innovations and institutions were native and praiseworthy, but required outside support to bear fruit in a highly hostile international environment.

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY LEAGUE

The Achaean League held an insubstantial place within the normal currents of Hellenic political and social life. From the first known habitation until the admission of Sicyon into the fold of the League, Achaea operated in the same way as many other ethnic confederations of Central Greece. Achaea represented a weak set of communities, many of which did not deserve the appellation of polis until late in the Classical period. These communities attempted to achieve strength and security through unity. The bonds of their confederation followed the conventional Greek custom for associating groups of people together: kinship. The concept of intraethnic cooperation held the Achaeans together, for the most part, for many centuries and induced the reconstitution of their confederation after its dissolution during the chaos of the wars of the Diadochi.

The Original Achaean League

To understand fully the project of the Hellenistic restoration, one must examine the original league which was to be restored. By most measures, the Achaean League was a traditional ethnic *koinon*. Sitting along the southern coast of the Corinthian gulf,

the League in its early existence did not even deserve the accolade of a league of poleis. Twelve *mera*, or districts, made up the constituent units of the League.¹ Exchanging foreign policy independence for mutual support, the Achaean *ethnos* forged a precarious position between their more powerful neighbors: Elis, the Arcadian poleis, and Sicyon.

This arrangement into a federation was far from a unique feature in the Hellenic landscape. For several centuries before Philip and Alexander, ethnic *koina*, or tribal federations, flourished in Central Greece. The Greeks had integrated ethnicity into their understanding of themselves from at least as early as the Archaic period. The definite references to regional tribes within the “Catalogue of Ships” in Homer’s *Iliad* demonstrate as much.²

In general, ethnicity may be defined as the ascription of a shared ancestor and/or shared homeland on all the individuals within a bounded group, with special emphasis on the former. There are other factors such as a shared history, a distinctive and shared culture (including language) and a sense of common solidarity, but most important is a putative common ancestor and homeland.³ A tie of blood kinship was a powerful concept within Hellenic society. While a nebulous idea of Hellenic unity existed, personified in the mythological son of Zeus, Hellen, most Greeks looked to another figure further down Hellen’s family tree as an ethnic progenitor. A few Greeks even looked to figures outside of the traditional Hellenic bloodline.⁴

¹Herodotus, 1.146. A *meros* might be a polis, but it was not necessarily so.

²Homer, *Iliad*, Book 2. The debate over the dating of the catalogue is not appropriate here, but as no one maintains its creation after the Archaic period, I feel safe in my assertion.

³ Jonathan Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, (Cambridge: 1997), 25.

⁴Most prominently the Arcadians, Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 171.

For the Achaeans that progenitor was the eponymous Achaeus, son of Xuthus, and grandson of Hellen.⁵ Achaeus was the brother of Ion, forerunner of the Ionians, and nephew to Dorus and Aeolus, eponymous founders of the Dorians and Aeolians, respectively.⁶ These four sons and grandsons of Hellen compose the four main branches of the Hellenic community, each with its own dialect.⁷ Situated within this lineage, the Achaeans had both this asserted kinship relationship and an associated mythology for how the people of Achaeus came to be and how they moved to their home. After much mischief, the sons of Achaeus made their home in Argos and later, Lacedaemon.⁸ The famous Achaeans of Homer's epics are identified with this group. According to the mythological account, those heroes found difficult circumstances when they arrived home from Troy, and subsequent generations experienced a mythological deluge, the return of the Heraclidae and their Dorian allies.

The final element in the ethno-genesis legend is the expulsion of the Achaeans from Argos and Sparta and the Achaean invasion and expulsion in turn, of the Ionians from the region known as Aegialus. This region became known as Achaea, a name which persists to the present day. This legend is widely reported, with the earliest instance coming from Herodotus.⁹ Even Polybius notes that it was the son of Orestes who led the Achaeans to their homeland, and founded the royal line which was only

⁵This is the typical family tree given in Apollodorus, 1.7.3. Also Pausanias, 7.1.2-3. Like all myths, there are various traditions which are drawn on given the differing circumstances which a community might find itself.

⁶Apollodorus, 1.7.3.

⁷These were the three major divisions, Doric, Ionic and Aeolic, plus the regional subdialect of Achaean Doric.

⁸Pausanias, 7.1.6.

⁹Herodotus, 1.145. Also Pausanias, 7.1.8, where Tisamenus, son of Orestes, offers peaceful settlement to the Ionians, which is rejected through a fear of his charisma and noble lineage.

ended by the introduction of democracy.¹⁰ In this way, the Achaean community could assert their unity from this initial group under the leadership of a famous royal family. They could further claim their homeland on the basis of conquest.

It is interesting to note the closeness with which the Ionians and Achaeans are portrayed. Their eponymous ancestors were brothers, and more closely related to each other than to their uncles, and hence, the peoples of Aeolus and Dorus. The Achaeans inhabited the former land of the Ionians, who were in turn forced to flee through Attica to Anatolia. Finally, the Achaean polis of Helice, which fell into the sea after an earthquake in 373 BCE, held in its territory the sacred precinct of Zeus Homarius, the meeting place of the Achaeans.¹¹ This polis served, in myth, as the rallying point to the Ionians during their migration, and the earthquake is said to have resulted from an Achaean denial of certain sacred objects which the Ionians had requested be returned in that year.¹² This example stands as fossilized evidence of some attempt to connect self-described Ionians and Achaeans.

These fictive kinship ties were the binding forces which held the Achaea *ethnos* together despite the mountain ranges which separated the individual *mera*.¹³ A common foundation legend was absolutely necessary to allow for greater cooperation, because of the devastating particularism which saturated the Hellenic mind. Unity allowed for strength, but undermined autonomy at the local level. This tension exists in most human societies but had a notable stranglehold on Greek political practice down to their

¹⁰Polybius, 2.41.4, F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* (Oxford: 1970), 229.

¹¹Pausanias, 7.24.6-24.13 for the earthquake narrative.

¹²Herodotus, 1.145.

¹³J K Anderson, "A Topographical and Historical Study of Achaea," *The Annual of the British School at Athens*. vol. 49, (1954), 74, where he notes the four discrete geographical units in which the region is divided, particularly the western and eastern extremes, with Dyme, placed on the one end and Pellene on the other, which truly stands isolated from the two central plains.

conquest and annexation, in part or fully, by the Persians, Macedonians and ultimately the Romans.¹⁴ The Greeks could only form more cohesive bonds under certain circumstances. Either a group of poleis felt that an external power threatened their autonomy far more than cooperation with their neighbors (which happened in the case of the loose league which repelled the Persians),¹⁵ or some poleis felt a trust among themselves, stemming from kinship, which made such a close union acceptable.

Ethnicity in the Hellenic context represents one of many layers to an individual's identity. Along with his *ethnos*, a Greek felt some loyalty to his identity to the greater Hellenic community. But the stronger loyalties were typically more local. A Greek also defined himself in terms of his polis, his *phyle*, his *phratry* and his *genos*, if he belonged to one.¹⁶ Alongside this set of groups developed the somewhat class based social associations which the labels democratic and oligarchic came to represent. All of these groups influenced each individual Greek's overall self-identity, and when one loyalty came into conflict with another, one was bound to weaken.

The Greeks were far from unusual in possessing a multilayered, complex self-identity. All human beings construct their identity in this way. Modern investigations into the relationship between the individual and larger groups, most especially a national group, have found that identities are constructed from multiple sources and are also situational.¹⁷ This is not to say that one's self-identity may be made or unmade at a

¹⁴The Persians did not conquer all of Greece, but did control many eastern Greeks through encouraging the ruinous wars between Athens and Sparta and later, Thebes and Sparta. The Macedonians, whatever their true ethnic relationship to the Hellenic world, represented a far different political order during their conquest of Greece.

¹⁵Even in this case, many poleis chose neutrality or alliance with the Persians, rather than assist bitter rivals.

¹⁶John V A Fine, *The Ancient Greeks: A Critical History* (Cambridge, 1983), 34. Not every ethnic Greek was admitted to each subgroup. In particular, generally wealthy aristocratic Greeks were part of a *genos*.

¹⁷Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Ethnic Difference* (Boston: 1969).

whim, but depending on the situation, one may alter certain aspects of how one understands one's self. One may emphasize one aspect of an identity over another, or abandon certain aspects altogether. One might also, critically for this work, add new aspects to one's identity, such as many individual Peloponnesians did when they vowed through a sacred oath to take the name and the laws of the Achaeans.¹⁸

If an ethnic connection existed for enough individuals, then the possibility existed to form an ethnic federation. However, the formation of such an ethnic federation represented a response to the general weakness of a particular group. Consanguine considerations were not predictive on their own of interpoleis cooperation, or even intrapolis relations.

The stronger an individual center or polis, the less ethnic ties convinced that center to cooperate with other consanguine states. Rather, a strong center could, and did, project its power to dominate its surrounding area, instead of allowing those areas to participate voluntarily. Phocis, a typical central Greek ethnic state, covered an area of roughly 1600 km² with no dominant center.¹⁹ Sparta, the proverbial super state of ancient Greece, covered the bottom half of the Peloponnesus. It dominated three separate regions, Laconia, Messenia and the Thyreatis, with the ruling polis of Sparta at its center. Satellite and dependent communities existed within Sparta's own valley and conquered communities without. This control was predicated not on consanguinity but on the martial prowess of the Spartan polity, which subjugated portions of its own population into helot status, conquered and annexed a neighboring state with which it did assert a

¹⁸As attested in the Orchomenean decree, W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig:1915-1924), 490.

¹⁹McInerney, *Folds of Parnassos*, 41.

common ancestor, and annexed another region with which it did not.²⁰ Meanwhile, consanguine Argos stood within its territory as the implacable foe to the Spartans, despite the mythological fraternity of their respective Dorian leaders. All of this stands in stark contrast to Phocis, which could not even dominate the whole of the geographically discrete Cephissus valley, with the Doric tetropolis stubbornly sitting independent at its headwaters.²¹

As previously mentioned, ethnicity was one part of a complex identity. To better understand the power and limitations of Greek ethnicity, some examples of its effects and functions are beneficial. At the strong end stands the Phocians during the Persian Wars. Their participation has seldom received much attention, beyond their failure at Thermopylae. The Phocian decision to aid the allied poleis was made certain when their hated neighbors, the Thessalians, submitted to the Persians after being overrun.²² It had not been long since Phocis had thrown off the yoke of Thessaly, and this victory had become central to the understanding of the Phocian identity.²³ Whoever the Thessalians supported, the Phocians would oppose. So strongly was the position held, that after the pass at Thermopylae fell, the Phocians refused to submit. All Phocians in the path of the Persian army fled to the heights of Mt. Parnassos.²⁴ They did not need to resist. The Thebans, who had also fought at the battle, chose to submit and were treated well. So too, were the Dorians just west of the Phocians, as well as many other *ethne* in central

²⁰The Helots of Laconia, Messenia and Kynuria. Herodotus asserts the Kynurians as an ethnically distinct people in 8.73 and Thucydides in 5.14.4 discusses the Argive desire to take this region back from the Spartans.

²¹McInerney, *Folds of Parnassos*, 47. The cities Boion, Pindos, Erinion and Kytineon formed the tetropolis.

²²Herodotus, 7.174.

²³McInerney, *Folds of Parnassos*, 173-178.

²⁴Herodotus, 8.32.

Greece.²⁵ The Phocians were bound to oppose the Thessalian supported Persians by their understanding of what it was to be Phocian.

Examples at the opposite end of the scale are plentiful. Dorians and Ionians only had common government in small areas, which were far from encompassing the whole community. These communities were scattered, however, and their disunion was reasonable. More interesting are the *ethne* which did occupy a geographically contiguous region, but who failed to unite. The Arcadians fit this description well.

The Arcadian *ethnos* does not fit neatly into the Hellenic genealogy. Purportedly descended from Arcas, descendent of Pelasgus, the Arcadians are not related to Hellen.²⁶ They claimed to be autochthonous. The power of the Hellenic genealogy was strong, however, and certain Arcadians claimed it. Looking at the ethnicity of Olympic victors from its inception down to the fifth century, they overwhelmingly spring from the four main stems of the Hellenic genealogy.²⁷ The remaining winners derive from a few families within the two regions of Arcadia and Locris.²⁸ Clearly some Arcadian families invented “Hellenic” progenitors to satisfy the *Hellandikai*, just as Herodotus reports of Alexander I of Macedonia.²⁹

Despite a serious attempt at unity, Arcadia remained fragmented until its incorporation into the Achaean League of the Hellenistic Age. The region they inhabited is large and mountainous, which certainly contributed to particularism, but they were not much worse off than the better united Achaeans. The difficulty lay in the powerful poleis

²⁵Herodotus, 8.33.

²⁶Pausanias, 8.4.1.

²⁷The previously named Dorians, Ionians, Achaeans and Aeolians.

²⁸Hall, *Hellenicity*, 163, within Arcadia, these were Phigaleia, Heraea, Mantinea and Stymphalus, with Heraea producing a family of winners.

²⁹Herodotus, 5.22.

on the eastern plain, Tegea and Mantinea. The most serious attempt at unity occurred during the period of Theban ascendancy in the mid-fourth century BCE. Nudged by their powerful Theban ally, hatred for their Spartan enemy and bound by ties of kinship, the Arcadians founded a new federal capital for themselves in western Arcadia, Megalopolis.³⁰ The newly unified league was powerful and assertive. In one of the more obvious cases of ethnic manipulation, they annexed by invitation the region of Triphylia, formally controlled by Elis. The Triphylians claimed that their progenitor, Triphylus, was a son of the Arcas.³¹ The Arcadians happily accepted their long lost cousins into the fold and seized the opportunity to expand. Adding insult to injury, the Arcadians even deprived Elis of the stewardship of the Olympic Games.³² But after a few years of vigor, the Arcadian League fell into internal disputes between its chief poleis.³³ Megalopolis would continue to assert its place as the capital of a united Arcadia, but was insufficiently powerful to compel the rest of the Arcadians into agreeing. Despite the proven advantages of combined action, the poleis of Arcadia valued autonomy more highly.

Moving past the concept of an ethnos and the relative power of ethnic identity, the region of Achaea had long been a regional backwater. Described as dependent on Mycenae in the *Iliad*, material culture suggests that Achaea was within the Mycenaean orbit, though political subordination cannot be proved.³⁴ The region remained underdeveloped into the archaic period, with only a few centers keeping relative pace with the rate of Hellenic urban development.³⁵ When Achaea emerged into the historical

³⁰Diodorus, 15.72.4.

³¹Polybius, 4.77.8.

³²Diodorus, 15.78.3.

³³Diodorus, 15.82.2.

³⁴Anderson, "Study of Achaea," 72.

³⁵Catherine Morgan, "Politics without Polis: Cities and the Achaean Ethnos, c.800-500 BC," *Alternatives to Athens: Varieties of Political Organization and Community in Ancient Greece* (New York: 2000), 210.

record, it represented a regional unit, connected in some sort of common government. What sort of connection is uncertain, but as Polybius suggests, the Achaean sense of unity was old by the classical period.³⁶

As a peripheral Peloponnesian state, Achaea maintained a general policy of neutrality when practicable, but was often forced into involuntary alliances during the Classical period. This placed a strain on the cohesion of the League, as it demonstrated the insufficient strength of even the collective Achaean *ethnos*. Several examples exist of major powers dealing directly with specific Achaean poleis, ignoring the League. Initially, Athens forced the Achaeans into dependent status during the formative years of the Delian League.³⁷ This would not last as a stipulation of the Thirty Years Peace negotiated in 446 dictated that Athens would relinquish their posts: Nisaea, Pegae, Troezen and Achaea.³⁸ One may wonder at the description of the Athenians holding the whole of Achaea, just as they did the ports of Megara and the Argolid polis of Troezen.³⁹

From total Athenian subjugation, Achaea again attempted to maintain a neutrality through the rising tensions which proceeded the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. As in earlier times, this neutrality was often violated. The tensions of that war brought about a weakening of League collectivity. The conflict along the Corinthian Gulf coast saw Peloponnesian armies and vessels traversing League land at will.⁴⁰ The Athenians under Alcibiades completely ignored the League as he, with his Argive allies, pressured Patrae

³⁶Polybius, 2.41.4-5, Walbank, *Commentary I*, 229.

³⁷Plutarch, *Pericles*, 19.4. Achaeans are friendly to Pericles. Thucydides 1.111.3, Pericles takes them as allies to attack Oeniadae.

³⁸Thucydides, 1.115.1.

³⁹ταῦτα γὰρ εἶχον Ἀθηναῖοι Πελοποννησίων. ταῦτα standing for the places named, including Achaea.

⁴⁰Thucydides, 2.84.3.

to build long walls in the Athenian style.⁴¹ These incidents eroded confidence in the League as the best means to maintaining security.⁴²

The League would gain some much needed stability in 417 from external forces. In the wake of Sparta's victory at the Battle of Mantinea, the high tide of Athenian influence in the Peloponnese was ended. Sparta acted to perpetuate the situation through the imposition of oligarchic regimes across the region. The most prominent change was in Argos, but Thucydides left a single sentence regarding Achaea, asserting that the Spartans settled things to their liking.⁴³ Though vague, it is easy to infer the meaning of the sentence. The Spartans established some form of oligarchy, ending the formally pro-Athenian democratic governments. Afterward, Achaea played a consistent and increasingly significant role as Spartan ally. This governmental reorganization had far reaching consequences. The character of Achaean politics would remain oligarchic in outlook down through the Roman period.⁴⁴

Immediately after the war, the place where one finds members of Achaean *ethnos* is among the mercenaries of the ten thousand. Xenophon notes two important facts concerning the group. Achaeans, along with Arcadians, represented over half the total army.⁴⁵ Achaea clearly had a surplus of fighting men following the war, and their economic situation did not permit these men a decent living at home. He also notes that the Arcadians and Achaeans were quite amenable to one another.⁴⁶ The wider implications of this traditional "fellow" feeling might be a willingness for Arcadian states

⁴¹Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, 15.3, Thucydides 5.52.2.

⁴²Anderson, "Study of Achaea," 84, for a similar analysis.

⁴³Thucydides, 5.82.1.

⁴⁴Larsen, *Greek Federal States* (Oxford:1968), 87. There was one recorded interruption, after the Theban invasion of Epaminondas. It was quickly reversed through the counter-coup of exiled oligarchs, who remained staunch Spartan Allies. Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 7.1.43.

⁴⁵Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 7.4.8.

⁴⁶Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 7.4.8.

to work with the Achaean polity. Though an interesting idea, Achaea would prove a thorn in Arcadia's collective side in the years after the Battle of Leuctra (371 BCE). Epaminondas effected democratic revolutions to gain another Peloponnesian ally. This backfired as the formally neutral Achaeans joined the Spartans wholeheartedly, presenting pressure to the Arcadians from both the north and south, and creating real difficulties according to Xenophon.⁴⁷

In 373 BCE, the League suffered a disaster at one of its *mera*. A great earthquake destroyed the polis of Helice. Along with the interesting points on the relationship between the Ionians and Achaeans, this disaster provides the example of the League in action. A force of two thousand men was dispatched to aid the inhabitants of Helice. But the disaster was too large for them to restore the polis in any way, so the territory and surviving residents were absorbed into the neighboring poleis of Aegium and Aegeira.⁴⁸ The acceptance of nonresidents into the fold of a polis is no small act. The existence of an overarching League and sense of kinship provided the survivors of Helice with a place to fulfill the chief imperative of Greek culture, citizenship in a polis.

Achaea did provide one recorded innovation which stood out among the other ethnic confederacies of central and southern Hellas. After the Peloponnesian War, perhaps in an effort to extend their commercial interests, the Achaeans admitted several trans-Corinthian Gulf poleis into their League, *as Achaeans*. The list of poleis is not spelled out in any text, but across different sources one can produce Calydon, Pleuron

⁴⁷Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 7.1.43.

⁴⁸Emily Mackil, "Wandering Cities: Alternatives to Catastrophe in the Greek Polis," *American Journal of Archaeology* vol. 108, no. (4 Oct., 2004), 511.

and Naupactus as new Achaean constituents.⁴⁹ Explicitly these poleis received Achaean citizenship and even federal garrisons to protect them from the nascent Acarnanians.⁵⁰ This annexation of territory was unique up to this point in Greek history as it conferred an ethnic, and federal, designation to nonmembers.⁵¹

One may wonder why both parties chose such a pioneering constitutional innovation. The Achaean interests were more straightforward. The additional poleis on the far side of the Gulf allowed for the increased influence on trade to the western Mediterranean from either domestic Achaean sources or rival Corinthian and Sicyonian ports. This had already been attempted from the opposite coast by the Athenians under Alcibiades, demonstrating the feasibility of the concept.⁵² The motivations for these smaller poleis might appear less obvious, but follow the classic pattern of empire by invitation. Their neighbors, the Acarnanians, had incorporated the Amphilochians to the north as well as the polis of Ambracia. They further seized the other Corinthian colonies, Sollium and Anactorium. Finally, they conquered the polis of Oeniadae closer to the Calydon region.⁵³ Less than fifteen miles separated Oeniadae from Pleuron, and Calydon was a bit further east.

⁴⁹Calydon is the most prominent in Xenophon, 4.6.1. Naupactus must be inferred from the fact that Philip II took it from the Achaeans and gave it to the Aetolians in Demosthenes speech IX. 34. Pleuron is the least obvious but the steps are laid out in Klaus Freitag, "Achaea and the Peloponnese," *The Politics of Ethnicity and the Crisis of the Peloponnesian League* (Cambridge: 2009), 18. Though generally one finds Pleuron paired with Calydon in the sources.

⁵⁰Xenophon, 4.6.1. Also Diodorus, 15.75.2 who mentions garrisons at Calydon, Naupactus and Dyme(?).

⁵¹Other contemporary analogues were short lived affairs which fail to bear a favorable comparison, such as the sympoliteia between Argos and Corinth, with Argos forcibly extending citizenship to the Corinthians in Xenophon, 4.4.6.

⁵²Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, 15.3, where the Athenians controlled Naupactus and the northern shore, Alcibiades attempted, with his allies the Eleans, Argives and Mantineans to march overland to Patrae.

⁵³Thucydides, 2.68.7 for Amphilochian Argos, 2.30.1. for Sollium, 4.49.1 for Anactorium where there is specific mention of Acarnanian settlers, thus describing an alternative to the Achaean practice or incorporation: the expulsion of a population and replacement. Oeniadae, at the mouth of the Acheloos river, was finally conquered 4.77.2. This last is consistently described as an Acarnanian city, Thucydides 1.111.3, perhaps the only one holding aloof from the League.

Acarnania's conquests had occurred during the Peloponnesian War, in which they had served as Athens' allies. Calydon and Pleuron receive little coverage but appear to be at least favorable to the Spartan side, being the fallback point of Eurylochos after his failure to capture Naupactus.⁵⁴ An inlet separated these poleis from Oeniadae, and perhaps the Acarnanians were either satisfied with bringing in their last wayward polis, or were intimidated by Aetolian power.⁵⁵ But Naupactus had a different enemy. The Athenians had settled a force of former Messenian Helots on that spot, seizing it from the Locrians.⁵⁶ The Aetolian League coveted this city, and had been Eurylochos' principle support during his failed attack. Later they had requested the Spartan King Agesilaus' help during his campaign to assist the new Achaean poleis, Calydon and Pleuron.⁵⁷ After the Peloponnesian War, Naupactus was detached from Athenian control and returned to the Locrians.⁵⁸ Thus, it too was now in the hands of Spartan allies. The Aetolians were also still interested in annexing Naupactus. In the wake of Spartan policy on their allies government, likely also possessed oligarchic government. With all three poleis aligned along similar foreign policy lines as Achaea, and threatened by leagues who did not offer new members equal rights, their motivation to join with the Achaeans becomes clear and sensible.

The details of these first nonethnic additions are impossible to determine presently, but one fact stands out. Naupactus, despite being described as freed from a federal garrison in the year 367, remained an Achaean polis down until Philip II granted

⁵⁴Thucydides 3.102.5. It is described as an Aetolian region, allied to Sparta.

⁵⁵Aetolians, after all, still carried their swords in public! Thucydides, 1.5.3. Though, so did the Acarnanians.

⁵⁶Thucydides, 1.103.3.

⁵⁷Xenophon, 4.6.14.

⁵⁸Diodorus, 14.78.5, for Messenians ejected from Messene by the Spartans.

it to the Aetolian League several decades later.⁵⁹ The Achaean League did not have the power to compel wayward trans-gulf poleis back into the fold, particularly while the power that “freed” them, Thebes, was still ascendant. Naupactus must have felt its interests rested best within the Achaean League system. Certainly it may have been the impulse to side with the least threatening external power,⁶⁰ but Naupactus’ decision demonstrates the appeal that the political dynamic within the League held for both ethnically and nonethnically Achaean members.

A united Achaea, restricted to the original region, lasted until the reign of the Macedonian king, Alexander the Great (336-323 BCE). Polybius attests to the disunion that befell the members, likely stemming from the same reasons the League teetered during the Peloponnesian War. With the Peloponnese a battlefield, the individual Achaean poleis would have suffered at the caprice of Hellenistic monarchs, and no amount of unity could have prevented it. The one concrete example of Macedonian interference was the imposition of the tyrant Chaeron on his home polis of Pellene during the reign of Alexander.⁶¹ As the easternmost polis and somewhat cut off from the rest of Achaea, it makes sense that Pellene would be affected so early. Polybius makes the plain distinction that Cassander and Demetrius Poliorcetes established garrisons, exercising direct control, while Antigonus Gonatas, perhaps in poorer circumstances, supported local tyrants.⁶² In the end, most Achaean poleis had garrisons or foreign tyrants down to 280 BCE, with the important exception of a few western poleis.

⁵⁹Diodorus, 15.75.2 during the archonship of Polyzelus, (there was anarchy in Rome so no consuls for the year) for the year of the “liberation,” Demosthenes speech IX.34 for its transfer from the Achaeans to the Aetolians and Strabo, 9.4.7, concurring that the city had been conferred on the Aetolians by Philip.

⁶⁰Arthur M. Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: 2006), 79, where the prevalence of such a decision is discussed.

⁶¹Pausanias, 7.27.7.

⁶²Polybius, 2.41.10, Walbank, *Commentary*, 232-3.

Reforming the League

The Achaean League reformed during the 124th Olympiad when four of the remaining ten ethnically Achaean poleis chose to reestablish their association.⁶³ However, the unity of Patrae, Dyme, Tritaea and Pharae was insufficient for those Achaean residents. This project of reformation had an explicitly expansionist theme. Polybius' mention that no records were kept due to the identity of the four cities⁶⁴ makes no sense unless one understands that they aimed at the recapture of Aegium, the traditional repository of League records. Those four poleis would not stop until they had "freed" and united with the other six.⁶⁵

The project was strictly traditional in its outlook. All Achaean settlements would be united as they had been. This policy was, in all probability, popular with the majority of ethnic Achaeans, making its execution somewhat straightforward. The main impediments were an explicitly mentioned Macedonian garrison at Aegium, perhaps another at Bura, and the tyrants at the remaining poleis.⁶⁶ Expansion proceeded from west to east with much internal help. An interesting role was played by Margos, who either was or became the leading citizen of the League before Aratus. Polybius reports his central role in the death of the tyrant of Bura, and the fear this act engendered within the neighboring tyrant of Karyneia, Iseas.⁶⁷ Karyneia was also purportedly the home of

⁶³ Polybius, 2.41.1, Walbank, *Commentary*, 229.

⁶⁴ Polybius, 2.41.12, Walbank, *Commentary*, 233.

⁶⁵ Polybius, 2.41.8, Leontium, Aegium, Aegira, Pellene, Bura and Karyneia, Walbank, *Commentary I*, 230-1.

⁶⁶ Polybius, 2.41.13, Walbank, *Commentary I*, 233-4. In Pausanias 7.27.7. Alexander the Great placed the tyrant, Khairon, on the throne of Pellene, and Polybius' implication is that Macedonia had placed or supported the remaining Achaean tyrants.

⁶⁷ Polybius, 2.41.14, Walbank, *Commentary I*, 234.

Margos.⁶⁸ This suggests that an Achaean exile community existed which quickly allied with, or perhaps helped to begin, the reformation of the League.

Polybius recounts this early history of Achaea only briefly. The strategies of unity and unification are somewhat difficult to see, but a single tactic is clearly evident. The Achaeans, probably led by Margos, targeted the tyrants of the remaining poleis, specifically killing the tyrant of Bura. The tyrant of Karyneia, Iseas, handed over his polis after a promise of personal safety.⁶⁹ The pressure of the state was brought to bear upon the ruling elite, and the Achaeans promised safety in return for their objectives. In the tyrant filled world of Achaea specifically, and the Peloponnese generally, this strategy worked well. The populations of these poleis probably welcomed reunification, and only the Tyrants prevented this process from occurring. Within a decade the Achaeans had reformed their League. Aratus of Sicyon aggressively continued this strategy of targeting individuals of power to achieve his own, and his League's, aims.

The Achaean polity was reconstituted with a somewhat archaic governing executive. Two *strategoi*, or generals, led the executive, with an additional officer called a *grammateus koinos*, or League secretary, selected in rotation among the member states.⁷⁰ This practice reflected fourth century Hellenic federal custom,⁷¹ and conformed to the idea that the renewed Achaean League was deeply traditional in its original outlook. It also represented an archaic strategy of unity which was soon to be abandoned. Offering equal leadership access to each of the ten Achaean constituents through a

⁶⁸ Polybius, 2.10.5, Walbank, *Commentary I*, 160.

⁶⁹ Polybius, 2.41.14, Walbank, *Commentary I*, 234.

⁷⁰ Polybius, 2.43.1, Walbank, *Commentary*, 235.

⁷¹ Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 45 for the Phocians with three *strategoi*, 179 for the Boeotians with their variously composed board of Boeotarchs, 93-94 for the Acarnanian board of seven *strategoi*, each from different poleis.

rotation gave each a chance for position and status every few years. But with Achaean strategy so deeply focused on elites, the system was bound to change in light of contemporary circumstances and practice.

Polybius notes that twenty-five years after the refounding of the League, the executive positions were altered with a single general, *strategos autokrator*, to lead League affairs.⁷² Margos of Karyneia won the position at its inception. The change reflected new contemporary practice. The most prominent Hellenistic federation, the Aetolian League, had a clear hierarchy of offices, with its *strategos*, *hipparchos* (cavalry commander/vice chief) and a *grammateus*.⁷³ This shift in League policy had unexpected and positive future results. The ability of any League citizen to stand for the single highest office provided a carrot to prominent politicians among non-League members in addition to the stick of threatened assassination. Internally it also provided the space for a single dominant politician, such as Margos and later, Aratus, to directly influence policy more often, and without a colleague. Consecutive terms were not permitted, but supreme office every other year was more tempting to the ambitious than shared office every four or five years.

Margos of Karyneia is nowhere attested using this new carrot. From what is reported, he followed a very traditional foreign policy. His involvement in the reconstitution of the League has been noted. In a number of other regards, however, the Achaeans acted in a manner reminiscent of their fourth century forbearers. The two mainstays of Hellenic Achaean politics were an interest in influencing Corinthian gulf

⁷² Polybius, 2.43.2, Walbank, *Commentary*, 235.

⁷³ Scholten, *Politics of Plunder*, 26.

trade and an alliance with Sparta to aid in that effort.⁷⁴ Under the leadership of Margos,⁷⁵ the Achaeans supported the Spartans in Areus I's coalition against the Macedonians.⁷⁶ When this alliance collapsed, overmatched by Macedonian power, the Achaeans eventually turned north. An alliance was struck with the Aetolians from across the Gulf, which Margos supported until his death in their only recorded joint mission, the relief of the Corcyrans (329 BCE).⁷⁷

Turning back to the campaign of Areus I, the Chremonidean War remains the one foreign policy choice in which the pre-Aratan League is recorded to have participated. The war principally involved King Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Athens, Sparta and her allies on the one hand, and Macedonia and her allies on the other. The composition of Sparta's allies reflects the closest one comes to the natural foreign policy orientations of the Peloponnese. Allied to Sparta were: Achaea, Elis, the Arcadian poleis of Tegea, Mantinea, Orchomenus, Caphya and Phigalia.⁷⁸ This list represents those states which were furthest away from Sparta, and hence, felt least threatened by Spartan power, as well as those Arcadian poleis which had reason to mistrust Sparta but despised their

⁷⁴ The episode which most strongly demonstrates this was when the Achaeans admitted Calydon and Pleuron into the League during the 390s. Xenophon 4.6.1 relates the position of Calydonians as Achaean *citizens*, and the request for Spartan aid to retain these new member poleis.

⁷⁵ His position as leading statesman is contingent upon the brief scraps Polybius provides on the early League. This includes his named role as Achaean leader during the reforming of the League and his position as first *Strategos Autokrator*. The only other Achaean Polybius deems worthy of mention is Iseas, the far-sighted tyrant.

⁷⁶ Stanley M. Burstein, ed., *The Hellenistic Age from the Battle of Ipsos to the Death of Kelopatra VII* (New York: 1985), 77. The Achaeans are listed as allies in the Chremonides Decree.

⁷⁷ Polybius, 2.10.5, Walbank, *Commentary*, 160. Margos was noted to have fallen aboard a quinquereme, perhaps the flagship of the fleet, instead of the other quadriremes.

⁷⁸ Burstein, ed. *The Hellenistic Age*, 77. The Cretans are also mentioned, but their ties to Sparta are of a different order. Tarn argues that many states joined Sparta in rejection of the protyrant policies of Antigonos Gonatas, Tarn, *Antigonos Gonatas* (Oxford, 1913), 293.

western neighbor, Megalopolis, more.⁷⁹ Excluded from this list are traditional Spartan enemies: Messene, Megalopolis, the Argolid poleis as well as Corinth. Jumping ahead, the Achaean League would integrate all of these states except for Messene during its early phase of expansion. The Corinthians were not necessarily anti-Spartan, but the Macedonian garrison on the Acrocorinth certainly was. This fetter of Greece merited its appellation, for the Macedonian garrison blocked Areus I from relieving the siege at Athens. Thwarted in his first attempt and overwhelmed in his second, Areus I found Antigonus' defensive system all too effective.⁸⁰

Achaean involvement in this war demonstrated the continued significance of regional rivalries in the loosely controlled Peloponnese. The conflict also reinforced the reality that the international situation had fundamentally changed. Foreign policy could not leave out the resources of the Hellenistic monarchies. While supporting an old ally, Sparta, the Achaeans asserted their continued hostility to the Macedonian king, and hence their goodwill toward Ptolemy II. The war confirmed yet again that success was only possible through the financial and military support of one of the great monarchies.

Though ancient historians covered political developments with greater zeal, religious practice played a more central role in the lives of most citizens, even the elite leaders of the League. Therefore, it would be a mistake to neglect the Achaean federal sanctuary. During this period, as Polybius had laid out in his coverage of the original League, the heart of cooperation and prime site of organization was the sanctuary of Zeus

⁷⁹That is, the western neighbor of each of those poleis save Phigalia, which was to the west of Megalopolis. Phigalia has the distinction of later being the directly controlled Aetolian base within the Peloponnese for raiding, Polybius, 4.31.1, Walbank, *Commentary*, 477.

⁸⁰Pausanias 3.6.4 on the loss of the first campaign due to lack of supplies and Plutarch, *Agis*, 3.4 on his death before Corinth.

Homarius.⁸¹ Religious sanctuaries served as the focal point of communal action, even after a Hellenic league had evolved beyond rudimentary organization and into well-functioning governments.⁸² By the time of the Cleomenean War, much of the bureaucratic and political functions had moved to Aegium, on whose territory the Homarion sat.⁸³ Yet from contemporary analogues one must assume that important and unifying religious rituals were still going at the precinct of Zeus Homarius.

⁸¹ Polybius, 2.39.6, Walbank, *Commentary*, 226. Similar to Pausanias 7.24.2. Zeus Homagyrius.

⁸² The close connection between a pan-ethnic religious site and a *koinon* capital is obvious. Thermon acted as the Aetolian capital with most official documents and treaties logged in that religious city. The Panionion, consecrated just north of Mycale, served as the religious center of the Ionian Greeks, and after Cyrus had conquered Lydia, it was there that common policy was forged.

⁸³ Strabo, 8.7.5. asserts that the “Amarion” is on the territory of Aegium, and that the council of the Achaeans meets there.

CHAPTER II

ARATUS

In many ways the renewed Achaean League resembled its fourth century self, with the addition of the almost default anti-Macedonian foreign policy. But the aggressive targeting of antagonistic tyrants, developed during the earlier period, became a mainstay of Achaean political strategy. With the admission of Sicyon as a full member of the federation in 251 BCE, the League took on a new expansionist program which ceased to consider only ethnic affiliation. Under the new leadership of Aratus of Sicyon, the Achaeans⁸⁴ relentlessly pressured their neighbors into joining the League on the same terms as Sicyon. This shift in priorities was not instantaneous. It took a few years for Aratus to climb to the pinnacle of League politics, though once established he remained there until his death in 213 BCE. It bears mentioning that the greater source material for this period allows for more depth in the examination of the situation of the League.

Aratus of Sicyon

In 251 BCE, Aratus, then an exile in Argos, launched a surprise attack upon his home city of Sicyon. He deposed the tyrant Nicocles and made himself master of the

⁸⁴ This phrase should now be understood politically, not ethnically unless specified.

polis.⁸⁵ Despite the vehement praise of Aratus as a paragon of democratic values,⁸⁶ Aratus replaced one tyrant with another, himself.⁸⁷ Plutarch portrays all of his decisions as his alone, with no need to convince a local assembly or *boule*.⁸⁸ Given the recent history of Sicyon, Aratus was only groundbreaking in his longevity. Nicocles was one of a long list of Sicyonian tyrants, a list which included Aratus' father, Cleinias.⁸⁹ Though not reported as such, Aratus may even have been Antigonus Gonatas' preferred tyrant.

As Aratus proved such a lodestone to the League, it is profitable to discuss briefly his polis of origin. The polis of Sicyon sat west of Corinth a few miles down the coast. Further west, Sicyon bordered the Achaean polis of Pellene, with the natural boundary traditionally the river Sythas.⁹⁰ The plain of Sicyonia was famous throughout the Greek world for its wealth, and supported a prosperous community.⁹¹ At some point during the Archaic period, Sicyon fought a war against the Achaeans, with some success.⁹² The artistic traditions of Sicyon were legendary, but bear relevance on the political situation in only one direct case during the Hellenistic period.

During the Classical period, Sicyon allied itself with Sparta, being a much more consistent and loyal ally than other poleis in that region. Sicyon demonstrated its relative strength in the general defense of Hellas against the Persians. Sicyonian triremes fought at Artemisium and Salamis, and three thousand hoplites, quite a large number, fought at

⁸⁵ Polybius, 2.43.3. Walbank, *Commentary*, 235-6, Plutarch, *Aratus*, 9.1.

⁸⁶ As understood in the Hellenistic context, essentially being the values opposed to monarchy in all its forms.

⁸⁷ Walbank, *Aratos of Sicyon*, (London: 1933), 34-35. Walbank takes the opposite view, understanding Aratus as a constitutional figure. He accepts Polybius' characterization of the tyrant-hating Aratus.

⁸⁸ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 9.3-4. The two decisions Aratus makes are pivotal in civic politics, the return of all the exiles and the decision to join, not ally with, the Achaean League.

⁸⁹ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 2.1-3.

⁹⁰ Audrey Griffin, *Sikyon*, (New York: 1982), 25. Though Sicyon, the stronger polis, sometimes pushed that boundary further west.

⁹¹ Griffin, *Sikyon*, 29.

⁹² Pausanias 7.26.2-3 for a failed attack on Aegeira and Pausanias 7.26.13 for the permanent destruction of the community of Donoussa.

Plataea.⁹³ Sicyonians were also quite active in the Peloponnesian War, supplying ships and troops to the allied effort in the Corinthian gulf and possibly with Brasidas' expedition into northern Greece.⁹⁴ Similar to the case of the Achaeans, Sparta, with the aid of one thousand armed Argive aristocrats, strengthened the oligarchy in Sicyon.⁹⁵ This strengthened tie paid dividends as Sicyon remained loyal during the Corinthian War. Sicyon served as the main base of Spartan operations during the Corinthian War. One gets a glimpse of Sicyon's standing among the armed combatants during this war. Though a useful ally and possessing a strategic location, an Argive force gladly attacked what they thought was a Sicyonian contingent.⁹⁶ Clearly their neighbors had a low opinion of Sicyonian *andreia*.

Sicyon's ethnic status was Dorian, but there was some important ambiguity which certain Sicyonians developed. The polis was subdivided into a number of *phyle*, or tribes. Three of these were the typical Dorian *phyle*, and in Sicyon, as in many Dorian poleis, there was a fourth, non-Dorian tribe. In the Archaic period there arose the tyrant Cleisthenes, grandfather to the better known Athenian reformer. Amongst many anti-Argive reforms and policies, he declared the Dorian tribes renamed to the derogatory Donkeymen, Goatmen and Swinemen. For his own non-Dorian tribe he gave the name of Archelaoi, "the ruling people."⁹⁷

After his death, Cleisthenes' opponents had the names changed back, but renamed the Archelaoi the "Aegialeis," the same as the former mythic name of the region of

⁹³Herodotus, 8.1 for 12 ships at Artemisium, 8.43 for 15 ships at Salamis. 9.28 for the 3000 hoplites.

⁹⁴Thucydides, 2.9.3 for the Sicyonian ships, 4.70.1 for the six hundred Sicyonians Brasidas incorporated into his army, which later set off for the Chalcidice Peninsula, 4.82.1.

⁹⁵Thucydides, 5.81.2.

⁹⁶Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 4.4.1 Sicyon as base, 4.4.10 for the amusing story about the mislabeled shields.

⁹⁷Herodotus, 5.68.

Achaea.⁹⁸ The official mythic tradition stresses that pre-Dorian peoples in this area were the Achaeans from Homer, the same group from whom the contemporary Achaeans claimed descent. The reasons for choosing the name Aegialeis may have been different at the time. The eponymous hero, Aegialos, was the son of Adrastos, King of Argos and hence, represented a rapprochement to that polis.⁹⁹ But the creation or reinforcement of that tradition made it ideologically easier to connect with the Achaeans just to their west.¹⁰⁰

In the aftermath of Macedonian subjugation of Greece, Hellenistic monarchs generally paired Sicyon with Corinth in strategic terms. The cities lay on the key land route from the Peloponnesus to central Greece. The tumultuous times laid a heavy hand upon Sicyon. The city was captured and lost as different Macedonian dynasts rose and fell.¹⁰¹ The last recorded seizure wrought a harrowing change on the inhabitants. Demetrius Poliorcetes, after his surprise attack succeeded, determined that the city was poorly placed. He moved the entire population onto the acropolis and destroyed the nonsanctioned portions of the old city. Adding insult to life altering destruction, he renamed the city Demetrias.¹⁰² It may be due to this dislocation, after the decade of constant war, which brought about the fall from a pure Dorian aristocracy to which Plutarch refers.¹⁰³

⁹⁸Herodotus, 5.67.

⁹⁹Apollodorus, 3.7.2.

¹⁰⁰Sicyonians were asserting this connection, according to Pausanias, 7.1.1.

¹⁰¹Diodorus, 19.66-67 for an early defeat of Sicyonians by Cassander's forces, Polyaeus 8.58 the city is betrayed to Ptolemy, Plutarch, *Demetrius*, 15.1-3 a failed attempt to take Sicyon, Plutarch, *Demetrius*, 25.1 and Polyaeus 4.7.3 on his final capture of Sicyon through sneak attack.

¹⁰²Plutarch, *Demetrius*, 25.2.

¹⁰³Plutarch, *Aratus*, 2.1. Unless one takes that comment back to Cleisthenes, which is also possible, but makes less sense since Plutarch states that since this loss, Sicyon had naught but tyrants and demagogues.

The sources fall silent after this traumatic event, but over the next few decades direct Macedonian control ebbed, and tyrants filled the power vacuum.¹⁰⁴ This stands in contrast to Corinth, which was the more important of the two sites. At its new location, the city was more secure from foreign threat, but experienced numerous internal upheavals as the remaining elites sorted out who would lead the city. An unnamed series of tyrants ended in the death of a named one, Cleon.¹⁰⁵ The people set up the “magistrate” Cleinias, Aratus’ father, who was in turn assassinated by Abantiades.¹⁰⁶ His death during the middle of the Chremonidean War, in which Sicyon did not participate, either suggests how preoccupied Sicyon was with internal affairs, or an effective and cost effective strategy the Macedonians maintained to keep the Hellenic poleis divided and distracted.

Within this volatile context, the brief narration of their fall from power casts doubt on Plutarch’s description of Cleinias as a chief magistrate along with a certain Timocleides. These two were the only men described as anything but a tyrant or demagogue.¹⁰⁷ However, their fall is attributed to Timocleides’ death and the assassination of Cleinias by an aspiring tyrant, Abantiadas. Cleinias and Abantiadas were in fact brothers-in-law. This indicates Cleinias’ inclusion in the small clique from which the tyrants rose.¹⁰⁸ Further, he held guest-friendship and hospitality with the Macedonian

¹⁰⁴Sicyon had a long history with tyrants, most recently the “democratic” tyranny of Euphron, supported by the Thebans Griffin, *Sikyon*, 76, and Aristratos, who “flourished during the time of Philip,” Plutarch, *Aratus*, 13.1. Aristratos was at some point ejected in favor of a Macedonian garrison, Demosthenes, 18.48.

¹⁰⁵Plutarch, *Aratus*, 2.1.

¹⁰⁶To place this in a chronological perspective, Aratus is twenty when he retakes Sicyon in 251, giving his birth year as 271, approximately, Polybius, 2.43.3. Since Aratus was seven at the time of his father’s death, the end of Cleinias’ rule came in 264, approximately, Plutarch, *Aratus*, 2.2.

¹⁰⁷Plutarch, *Aratus*, 2.2. Walbank, *Aratos*, 29-30 where he accepts uncritically Cleinias’ description as magistrate.

¹⁰⁸Plutarch, *Aratus*, 2.3.

King, Antigonos II Gonatas.¹⁰⁹ Finally, Timocleides' natural death prompted the collapse of their government. This hints at the personal nature of their power, as opposed to officeholders whose authority rests in the position they inhabit. Only the deference to the historically great Aratus granted his father immunity from the charge of tyranny.

Aratus sought to regain the power lost by his father. Failing to get royal patronage, Aratus launched his assault with the support of the Sicyonian exile community, mercenaries and thirty members of his household. His relationship to the great Hellenistic monarchies was ambivalent. Though possessing a friendship tie to the Antigonids, the Ptolemaic court sent Aratus twenty five talents soon after his coup.¹¹⁰ Plutarch reports that Aratus was wary of Antigonos Gonatas' interference on account of that monarch's opposition to freedom.¹¹¹ This statement may be a somewhat truthful rendering of the young Aratus' geo-political concerns, or it may be an anachronistic insertion. Whatever Aratus' exact standing in the eyes of the Antigonid court, Plutarch acknowledges fear of Antigonos along with internal dissensions as leading to Aratus' decision to apply for admission to the Achaean League.¹¹²

The months directly after Aratus' coup did not see him immediately offer his polis to the Achaean League. For a time, Aratus attempted to gain Antigonid support again. Though spurned while he was yet an exile in Argos, as master of Sicyon, Aratus had something to offer Antigonos Gonatas. The jewel in the fetters of Greece, the Acrocorinth, had recently fallen out of the Antigonid orbit. Seduced by Ptolemaic wealth, Alexander, governor of Corinth, proclaimed himself an independent king in 252

¹⁰⁹Plutarch, *Aratus*, 4.2. Aratus sought Antigonos' support on the basis of that past friendship, but failed. He also looked to Ptolemy, pointing to the alternatives faced by aspirant tyrants.

¹¹⁰Plutarch, *Aratus*, 11.2.

¹¹¹Plutarch, *Aratus*, 9.3.

¹¹²Plutarch, *Aratus*, 9.4. Polybius, 2.43.3, says that it was Aratus' long admiration for the Achaean polity.

BCE.¹¹³ Macedonian influence in the Peloponnese was thus greatly reduced just as Aratus seized Sicyon. Aratus clearly offered to raid Alexander on Antigonus' behalf.¹¹⁴ This offer was the natural course for Aratus to take, and probably involved a deal for subsidies to steady Aratus' new regime. He desperately needed funds to reconcile the recently returned exiles.¹¹⁵ Antigonus' support must have fallen short of expectations, as Aratus fatefully chose a different source of succor within less than a year.

There is no record of the process, or debate, of Sicyon's admission into the League. The Achaean reasons for admitting Sicyon remain obscure. The addition of a comparably powerful city may be motivation enough, and the ethnic and traditional hurtles may not have been too high.¹¹⁶ Certainly the trauma Sicyon had experienced would open its citizens to new fundamental arrangements of the political order. With the whole city moved, including the probable abandonment of cults tied to specific places and the dislocation of family holdings, the timing was most propitious to put forward some bold new plan. The moment was further supported by an alternative mythic tradition which Aratus could hold out as a return to a true Archaic state of affairs, at least for a significant portion of the citizen body.

Plutarch lists political and idealistic considerations for Aratus, which may be accurate, but a further conjecture into his reasoning may be hypothesized. Aratus

¹¹³Plutarch, *Aratus*, 17.2.

¹¹⁴Plutarch, *Aratus*, 18.1.

¹¹⁵Walbank, *Aratos*, 35.

¹¹⁶As noted before, the Achaeans had already accepted two nonethnically Achaean, or even Peloponnesian poleis. Further, though Plutarch stresses Sicyon's Dorian character, *Aratus*, 9.4. he also notes that they have fallen from a pure Dorian aristocratic government *Aratus*.2.1. This comment may refer to recent events, or the infamous anti-Dorian crusade of the sixth century tyrant Cleisthenes. A simple assertion of this existing, and by that time ancient, alternative tradition would have smoothed any ethnic qualms, and may have created the idea for outright admission instead of mere alliance.

required an outside military force to secure his legitimacy and prop up his regime.¹¹⁷ In 252 BCE, Antigonus Gonatas was distant and weak, and Aratus had antagonized the new king of Corinth. His neighbors, Achaea and large parts of Arcadia were unfriendly, if not openly hostile, to Macedonian interests. Aratus turned from the normal source of military assistance and instead chose to accept it from his Achaean neighbors. One possible example of this military help may be the extraordinary authority Aratus was given during the height of the Cleomenean War, though during the *strategia* of his supporter Timoxenus. Using federal troops, Aratus purged Sicyon of all untrustworthy citizens through summary executions.¹¹⁸ At that time, he held no official office. After he had dealt with the Sicyonian traitors and failed to do the same in Corinth, he was officially invested with absolute authority.¹¹⁹ Though this was a much later action, its occurrence lends weight to the notion that Aratus viewed this as a tool to maintain his power. The Achaean League could function in the place of Macedonian power.

The addition of Sicyon in 251 BCE augmented the strength of Achaea, but not the overall strategic position. The Achaean League remained confined to the southern shore of the Corinthian Gulf. The Aetolian League across the gulf was at that time a powerful neighbor, which at that moment was malevolently ambiguous, but it would soon move closer to alliance. Aetolia had strong alliances, particularly with Elis, but also

¹¹⁷Walbank, *Aratos*, 36, comes to a similar conclusion. He reasons that the economic hardships brought by so many returned exiles would soon develop a political dimension against Aratus. Since he sees Aratus as a magistrate, Walbank must either see Aratus securing his place at the ballot box or staving off a potential coup.

¹¹⁸Plutarch, *Aratus*, 40.2. Federal troops are not mentioned in Sicyon, but in Corinth under the same circumstances Aratus fails to purge the traitors, with many of his troops deserting and only thirty following him as he escaped the city.

¹¹⁹Plutarch, *Aratus*, 40.2 for the executions and 41.1 for his investment of office. Walbank, *Aratos*, 98 associates the elevation to extraordinary command to the upcoming alliance with Antigonus, which officially began in that year. The Achaeans wanted to give their leading statesman the authority to treat with King Antigonus.

Messenia.¹²⁰ They also occupied under direct control, the town of Phigalea just to the south of Elis, from which their raiders found safe haven while on the frequent Aetolian piratical forays.¹²¹ Arcadia was a patchwork, with many independent states and with many poleis friendly to Macedonia. To the east, Corinth stood as one of the fetters of Greece, garrisoned by the friendly, but ambitious, Alexander. Argos and its dependencies stood further southeast, all reliant on Macedonia. Aside from a warming relationship with Aetolia, which bore fruit with a formal alliance in 238 BCE, Achaea allied itself with Sparta.¹²²

Sicyon's admittance into the League did not alter its own stature by much in the years immediately following. Aratus, though master of his own polis, took a few years before gaining his first *strategia*.¹²³ Margos, or other ethnically Achaean statesmen, still held the reins of power. Paying his dues, Aratus served in the federal cavalry, which befitted a man of his station. To whatever service Plutarch is referring, it was not the position of *hipparchos*, since he cultivated the reputation of obedience to proper authority.¹²⁴ His only other noted service before reaching the supreme federal office was the procurement of funds from Ptolemy.¹²⁵ Though mainly directed to his own city, one may speculate on the influence these Ptolemaic talents had on his subsequent election to the *strategia*.

¹²⁰Polybius, 4.9.9 on the alliance with Elis, Walbank, *Commentary*, 458. There is a long tradition, beginning with Herodotus, 8.73, that the people of Elis are Aetolians, and that an alliance of consanguinity exists between them historically. Polybius 4.6.9 on the alliance with Messenia, Walbank, *Commentary*, 455.

¹²¹Polybius, 4.31.1, Walbank, *Commentary*, 477.

¹²²Pausanias records some conflict between the Achaeans and Sparta under Agis IV, but only after Aratus had become *strategos*.

¹²³Joining the League while he was about twenty, he may not have met an undocumented age requirement for the highest posts, Walbank, *Aratos*, 39.

¹²⁴Plutarch, *Aratus*, 11.1.

¹²⁵Plutarch, *Aratus*, 11.2-13.4 for the whole adventure.

The ascendancy of Aratus led to new foreign policy ideas. Aratus directed a series of actions which were directed primarily against the interests of Aetolia. His first *strategia* was marked by three military operations: raids against Aetolia and West Locris, an Aetolian dependency, the failed march to aid the Boeotians in their war against Aetolia, and the failed attack on the Arcadian polis of Cynaetha.¹²⁶ The timing of these events is difficult to establish, but logically they took place in the same year and they all point to Aratus' anti-Aetolian strategy. The raids on Calydon and Locris may have been simple retaliation or provocation. The Cynaetha operation was certainly aggressive, but likely had a defensive aspect.

Cynaetha rests along the watershed between Achaea and Arcadia, just on the Achaean side. Its position controlled one of the routes into Achaea available to Aetolia through their allies, the Eleans.¹²⁷ This route had only just opened. Lydiades, newly raised to the tyranny in Megalopolis, had surrendered the Arcadian poleis of Alipheira and Psophis to Elis.¹²⁸ With so much Arcadian territory in Elean hands, Aetolia had the capacity to raid nearly any point within the Achaean League. Though only a few years away, the alliance between Aetolia and Achaea was not yet born. Aetolian raids had clearly become a real nuisance. Aratus sought to close this route into central and eastern Achaea. He again demonstrated the penchant for encouraging betrayal and surprise

¹²⁶Plutarch, *Aratus*, 16.1. for the raids and the army to help the Boeotians. Polybius, 20.4.4. for a diatribe against the profligate Boeotians for not waiting for Achaean reinforcements. Polybius, 9.17.1-8. For the Cynaetha operation. He describes Aratus as young, but *strategos* of the League. The failure of the operation is predicated on his inexperience, which makes his first *strategia* more acceptable, than any one subsequent to the seizure of the Acrocorinth. F. W. Walbank, "Aratos' Attack on Cynaetha (Polybius IX, 17)" *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 56, part 1 (1936), 68.

¹²⁷Cynaetha created a corridor along with the Arcadian town of Psophis, possessed by Elis down to the Social War Polybius, 4.70.4. This corridor extends between Arcadia and Achaea allowing for great freedom of movement throughout most of Achaea and northern Arcadia, Walbank, *Commentary*, 524.

¹²⁸Walbank, *Aratus*, 44.

attacks which had won him Sicyon and would gain the Achaeans many other strongpoints. Though the attack failed, it signaled an assertive League.

The expedition into Boeotia heralded a cunning and dangerous League. According to Polybius, the Achaeans had instigated the war in the first place.¹²⁹ Just as at Cynaetha, the plan ultimately failed on account of the tardiness of Achaean forces. But those forces marched, 10,000 strong, to a region close, but not adjacent, to Achaea. Their intentions were to blunt the growth of a stronger power, again, Aetolia.¹³⁰ From the passive ally of the Spartans in the 260s, the Achaean League had emerged as a force to be reckoned, if not greatly feared.

Expansion

For eight years, events fared not much differently from the preceding decades, until Aratus' second *strategia* when he captured the Acrocorinth. As historians recognize, this was his great accomplishment. After this event the power structure of the Peloponnese fundamentally changed. Macedonian influence was dealt a severe blow. A grateful Corinth chose to join the Achaean League, following the example of Sicyon. A garrison remained on the Acrocorinth, however, this time of Achaean rather than Macedonian origin. The changing of the flag on this fetter of Greece represented the new order within the Peloponnese.

The presence of an Achaean garrison on the Acrocorinth signaled the hegemonic intent of the Achaean League. Four hundred Achaean, not Corinthian, hoplites guarded

¹²⁹ Polybius, 20.4.4. Walbank, *Commentary III*, 68, who started the war is ambiguous, but the Achaeans unequivocally attempted to aid the Boeotians against the interests of the Aetolian League.

¹³⁰ Plutarch, *Aratus* 16.1.

the Acrocorinth, with fifty dogs and their trainers.¹³¹ Polybius attributes high ideals, such as opposition to tyrants and Macedonians as well as the love of liberty, to his hero's actions.¹³² But this action demonstrates Aratus sought not to create a new political order, but a new military one. He made the world safe for anti-Macedonian tyrants, not democracy. The Corinthians would have as little access to their strategic acropolis under the Achaeans as they did under the Macedonians. When they attempted to exercise some autonomy, Aratus tried to have his opponents purged, but failing that, held the Acrocorinth against the people of Corinth at all costs.¹³³

Achaean success at Corinth brought further gains. Megara, Epidaurus and Troezen, Dorian cities all, followed the decision of Corinth.¹³⁴ Aratus saw the next logical target as Argos. His opponent was Aristomachus, the tyrant who had sheltered him when he was a boy.¹³⁵ Coldly calculating the best way to power in Argos was the death of his former benefactor, Aratus arranged for his assassination. The assassins fell out over petty issues, but some slaves killed Aristomachus in any event.¹³⁶ Aratus rushed Argos with all available Achaean forces when he heard the news, only to find that Aristippus had seized the tyranny.¹³⁷ Fined for attacking a neighbor in peacetime, Aratus came to grips with his new opponent.

¹³¹Plutarch, *Aratus*, 24.1.

¹³²Polybius, 2.43.8. Plutarch concurs, leaving few actions unexplained by the quip, because Aratus hated tyrants, Walbank, *Commentary*, 236.

¹³³Polybius, 2.53.3, Walbank, *Commentary*, 255. Plutarch, *Aratus*, 44.2. This passage, Κλεομένες... ἐκλιπὼν Ἀκροκορινθῶν, seems to indicate Cleomenes had taken the Acrocorinth. Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 19.3-4, discusses the stubborn resistance of the Achaean garrison, and Cleomenes negotiations with Aratus to share the stronghold, suggesting he did not take it. Probably the eklipon refers to leaving off the siege of the Acrocorinth, since had he taken it he would probably have attempted to hold it.

¹³⁴Plutarch, *Aratus*, 24.2. I mention their Dorian heritage because it is interesting that they are all Dorians, whereas the next polis down that coastline is Hermione, a self-described Dryopean Polis.

¹³⁵Plutarch, *Aratus*, 3.1.

¹³⁶Plutarch, *Aratus*, 25.1-4.

¹³⁷This Aristippus was likely the son of Aristomachus, since his own father was named Aristippus, also a tyrant of Argos, Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, 30.1. Plutarch takes a moment to contrast the lives of Aristippus and

After this, Aratus attacked that city on a number of occasions, always receiving a rebuff, though sometimes carrying away a lesser prize. After one failed invasion, Aratus detached Cleonae from Argive control.¹³⁸ Making full use of the new League member, Aratus had the people of Cleonae hold the Nemean games as a counter to the games at Argos, and he proceeded unscrupulously to seize all athletes traveling to the wrong (Argive) games.¹³⁹ While he never won a spectacular victory, Aratus kept the pressure up on his neighbors, particularly those closely allied with Macedonia. These action eroded confidence in the protection of the Macedonian King Antigonus Gonatas, who did little to reassert his own power.

While Macedonian power receded, other Hellenic powers contended with the Achaeans. During a large plundering expedition which was the pillar of their social structure,¹⁴⁰ the Aetolians marched through the Isthmus of Corinth in to Achaean territory. In a demonstration of his avoidance of pitched battles, Aratus declined to engage the Aetolians at the border of the League, then in the territory of Megara. This was despite the assistance of the Spartan army under the command of King Agis IV.¹⁴¹ This Aetolian force skirted around the Acrocorinth and Sicyon, turning to sack Pellene. Aratus had by this point dismissed his allies, and even some Achaean forces. But with his remaining troops he fell upon and routed the Aetolians, who had become disorganized

Aratus, describing the wretched lengths to which Aristippus went to maintain his safety. Aratus has the love of the people and is safe everywhere, Plutarch, *Aratus*, 26.1-3. This goes to the heart of the Aratus narrative, that though he directs everything, he is not a tyrant. It seems unlikely, however, that Aristippus would have lasted so long against Aratus without a good deal of support from the Argive people.

¹³⁸Plutarch, *Aratus*, 28.3.

¹³⁹Plutarch, *Aratus*, 28.4.

¹⁴⁰Joseph Scholten, *Politics of Plunder*.

¹⁴¹Plutarch, *Aratus*, 31.1, *Agis*, 15.1, which describes the young King yielding to the greater authority of the elder statesman, Aratus. Walbank, *Aratos*, 51, conjectures that Aratus feared the association with the reformer, Agis. He feared that the reforms would fail, and the Achaeans would find themselves the enemies of a reactionary conservative Sparta.

in their plundering.¹⁴² Two years later Aratus took credit for the formation of an alliance with these Aetolians through their leader, Pantaleon, though there is reason to link Margos of Karyneia to this development.¹⁴³

In this action Aratus was in most typical form. Avoiding open battle, Aratus defeated his opponents through an attack from unexpected quarters and at an unexpected time. He received heavy criticism for his initial decision, only to reap the praise of his eventual success.¹⁴⁴ But in his dismissal of his Spartan ally he also showed himself true to form. Aratus would suffer no equal, and certainly no rival in power and glory, so long as he had the ability to stop it. Engaging in an operation in which Aratus was self-consciously deficient, with the aid of another army which was proficient, would naturally lead to the credit falling to that other army. This pattern would repeat itself as other powerful poleis joined the Achaean League, and Aratus found himself with more permanent rivals for authority and power.

In addition to Argos, Athens was another polis which continually felt the pressure of Aratus' Achaeans. Placed under a Macedonian garrison since the Chremonidean War, Athens seemed to conform to the typical target of Achaean "liberation." The polis of Megara had joined the Achaean League, offering them a border with Attica.¹⁴⁵ In tandem with his attacks on Argos, Aratus began raiding the Athenian port of Piraeus, the location of the main Macedonian garrison on the hill of Munchia. He attacked not twice, or thrice, but many times.¹⁴⁶ What the specific appeal of Athens was to Aratus is not

¹⁴²Plutarch, *Aratus*, 31.2-3.

¹⁴³Polybius, 2.10.5 for the only joint expedition between Achaea and Aetolia. Margos was a noted participant.

¹⁴⁴Plutarch, *Aratus*, 31.1.

¹⁴⁵Plutarch, *Aratus*, 24.2.

¹⁴⁶Plutarch, *Aratus*, 33.4, οὐ δις οὐδὲ τρίς, ἀλλὰ πολλάκις.

attested, but either for the prestige of this famous polis or some other reason, Aratus attacked Athens with perhaps more frequency than Argos. Just as at Argos after the death of Aristomachus, Aratus attacked Athens without provocation and gained notoriety for his breach of the peace.¹⁴⁷ Aratus is noted as stepping up his attacks after the death of Antigonus Gonatas.¹⁴⁸ But his efforts would go to naught for another ten years until the death of Gonatas' son and successor, Demetrius II. Only then, would the garrison commander, Diogenes, accept a large bribe to discharge his mercenaries and leave, with twenty talents contributed directly from Aratus.¹⁴⁹

In this act Aratus conformed to his usual strategy. He directly targeted the single most powerful individual in Athens. But once Diogenes, who was not a local leader but a foreigner, relinquished his power, the state of Athens did not opt to join the Achaean League. One might note the proud independent tradition of the Athenians to explain their glad use of Achaean help to eject the Macedonians, followed by their refusal to join the League. But certainly other poleis that had joined to that point possessed similarly proud traditions of autonomy. The central impediment was the Athenian democratic government.¹⁵⁰ Less susceptible to the pressures Aratus brought to bear, Athenian statesmen did not see the benefit in joining the Achaean League. However, some benefits did rebound to the Achaean cause for all of Aratus' efforts. Hermione, as well as the island of Aegina, joined the League in the aftermath of Athens' independence.¹⁵¹ The government of Aegina is uncertain, but Polybius states that Hermione was turned over by

¹⁴⁷Plutarch, *Aratus*, 33.2.

¹⁴⁸Plutarch, *Aratus*, 34.1.

¹⁴⁹Plutarch, *Aratus*, 34.4.

¹⁵⁰As always, the term democratic does not imply the kind of radical democracy Athens practiced in the fifth century, but rather as the antonym to the tyrannical or monarchical governments then prevalent throughout the Greek world.

¹⁵¹Plutarch, *Aratus*, 34.5.

its tyrant, Xenon.¹⁵² Aratan tactics succeeded again on the group which they most effectively targeted, tyrants.

This policy continued to bear fruit further afield. Though obscured by the focus on Argos, the Achaean League clearly continued to have an interest in Arcadia. Seeing the intense pressure on Argos, Lydiades, tyrant of Megalopolis, voluntarily handed his city over to the League. The aggressive foreign policy of the League most certainly influenced this decision. In addition to the hounding of the Argive tyrants, Lydiades was further frightened by the success of Achaean arms in the nearby polis of Heraea.¹⁵³ The conquest of this polis, fairly deep in Arcadia, suggests that the Achaeans had matched their eastward march with one to the southwest. Attacks in this direction may have taken place during Aratus' off year,¹⁵⁴ as the *strategos* in that action is recorded as Diaetas. This may also represent the divergent priorities held within the Achaean leadership. Aratus focused on the east, the natural orientation of a Sicyonian, while another faction, still supportive of the successful Aratan program, looked into Arcadia.

Seeing the storm on the horizon, Lydiades searched for a way out. He was perhaps inspired by the example of Iseas and Margos. Negotiations may have occurred, stressing the power and prestige of joining the League. Whether promises were made, or not, Lydiades resigned his tyranny and joined his polis to the League.¹⁵⁵ This completed, he was elected *strategos autokrator* on Aratus' off years. This event, much as the capture

¹⁵²Polybius, 2.44.6, Walbank, *Commentary*, 238-9.

¹⁵³Polyaenus, 2.36.

¹⁵⁴ The Achaean supreme magistrate was a single *strategos* or general, and an individual could not hold this office consecutively, leaving the dominant politician, such as Aratus, of a particular period to hold the supreme magistracy every other year.

¹⁵⁵Polybius, 2.44.4, Walbank, *Commentary*, 238. Plutarch, *Aratus*, 30.2. The irony of resigning one's tyranny and then *making* your city join the Achaeans was clearly lost on these ancient writers.

of the Acrocorinth, ushered in a further large addition of territory. All Arcadian dependencies of Megalopolis naturally followed suit.

Finally, Argos joined the League under the aegis of Aristomachus, son of the by then deceased Aristippus.¹⁵⁶ With Argos came Phlius, making the whole of the Argolid region united within the Achaean League. This represented a feat not accomplished by a native Peloponnesian political entity since perhaps the Bronze Age. Polybius ties this accomplishment to the death of Demetrius II, whose successor, Philip V, was still a minor. Plutarch relates that Aratus communicated directly with Aristomachus, offering Lydiades as a positive model, bringing up both the benefits which accrued to the League and to the person. Then, in a questionable narrative, Lydiades attempts to bypass Aratus and claim the credit for himself. Aratus then publically denounces the proposal, only to back it once more after it has gone down in defeat under Lydiades' leadership. Finally, in the year 229, during the *strategia* of Lydiades, Aristomachus agreed to hand over his city in exchange for 50 talents to pay off his mercenaries. This proposal was ratified by the Achaean council¹⁵⁷ and both Argos and Phlius joined the League.¹⁵⁸ Just as in the case of Lydiades, Aristomachus was elected *strategos* in the following year.¹⁵⁹

The pattern of Aratan strategy finds itself fully reported in the ancient sources for Argos. Aratus had at first violently targeted this tyranny. He was certainly responsible for the death of one tyrant and possibly a second. He attempted several surprise attacks to seize the city as he had seized Sicyon, Corinth, Cleonae and other poleis. This

¹⁵⁶ Polybius, 44.6, Walbank, *Commentary*, 238.

¹⁵⁷ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 35.3, he uses the word οἱ σύνεδροι. As a technical word, this seems to be only the *boule*, or smaller, more representative body, when compared to the primary assembly or *ekklesia*. The gravity of the decision, and his use in 35.2 of the τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, suggests Plutarch is being loose with his terms. More on federal institutions in Chapter 3.

¹⁵⁸ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 35.1-3.

¹⁵⁹ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 35.3. Polybius, 2.60.5, Walbank, *Commentary*, 266.

matched his known desire to personally secure the addition of a new Achaean member all on his own terms. When this failed, he, at long last, consented to a diplomatic approach directly to the new tyrant of Argos. When a rival threatened to steal, or at least share the glory, Aratus took steps to make the deal all his own. In fact, Lydiades may have initiated the negotiations in the first place.¹⁶⁰ Aratus certainly had good reasons to position himself as the originator of the scheme which finally incorporated Argos in the Achaean League. In any event, the negotiations targeted Aristomachus specifically and it was on his authority as tyrant that the storied polis of Argos, with its tradition of proud autonomy going back to Homer, joined the League.

The addition of Argos brought the League to its widest extent through the force of its independent arms. The Achaeans continued to push outward, however, up until the disastrous losses during the Cleomenean War. As the conflict with Sparta heated up, one finds references to raids and attacks upon the territory of Elis.¹⁶¹ This gives a clue to one of the more intriguing developments during the run up to the war. Just prior to the commencement of the conflict, Cleomenes acquired the Arcadian poleis of Tegea, Mantinea and Orchomenos. As the major cities of eastern Arcadia, this enhanced Sparta's power considerably, as well as allowing for a stronger strategic position against the Achaean League. Formally these poleis had a close association with the Aetolians, which Polybius claims was membership in the Aetolian League. Polybius further

¹⁶⁰Plutarch, *Aratus*, 35.2, Lydiades points out Aratus' implacable hatred of tyrants to Aristomachus as a way of convincing him to work with Lydiades. He likely also, though this is nowhere attested, brought up the murder of his father and grandfather.

¹⁶¹Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 5.1.

attributes Aetolian duplicity to the annexation, claiming that the transfer received their approval.¹⁶²

The Achaean League, Aetolia and Sparta were the chief anti-Macedonian powers in mainland Greece. Their relationship was far from straightforward. Though their stances regarding the great Hellenistic monarchies were essentially the same, the growth of the Achaean League had profoundly changed the local dynamics for the two older powers. For the Spartans, their old ally and dependent began to rival them in influence and prestige. This situation, though unpleasant, was still tolerable while the Macedonians maintained some control in the Peloponnese. The Aetolians chose to enlist the nascent League in their greater struggle against the Macedonians. The alliance of 239 BCE profited both Leagues, though they rarely cooperated directly. At the death of Demetrius II, this alliance was triumphant. But in short order, his successor, Antigonos III Doson, successfully pushed back the Aetolians and left them vulnerable at every point in which they held influence.¹⁶³

Aetolian weakness provided the impetus for fresh aggression in the Peloponnesus. It began with Cleomenes III's seizure of the western Arcadian poleis. Aetolia's connivance cannot be ruled out; distant, exposed poleis might be better utilized through balancing competing powers. But perhaps more likely it was simple preoccupation. The timing of the annexation certainly points to Spartan opportunism.¹⁶⁴ Regardless, the Achaeans may have perceived Aetolian collusion and altered their stance in return. It is in this light that one should consider the Achaean raid on Elis.

¹⁶²Polybius, 2.46.2.

¹⁶³Scholten, *Politics of Plunder*, 172.

¹⁶⁴Walbank, *Commentary*, 243 for this interpretation. Scholten, *Politics of Plunder*, 185, for a thorough investigation of the issue.

As it would continue to be, Elis was at this time a close ally of Aetolia. Aetolia was still the nominal ally of the Achaean League. Plutarch records the desire on the part of Aratus to unite the whole of the Peloponnese into the League, although this opinion possibly derives from his pro-Spartan source, Phylarchus.¹⁶⁵ This desire does, however, correspond to ideas in Polybius.¹⁶⁶ Whether anachronistic or true, Achaean aggression toward Elis certainly matched their former aggressive conduct. This direct provocation of an Aetolian ally was not met with outright war. Just as Sparta seized eastern Arcadia with impunity, Achaea molested Elis with resistance only coming from Sparta.¹⁶⁷

The decision to break with Aetolia through attacks upon its primary Peloponnesian ally must have come from Aratus. As mentioned before, the only recorded joint operation between the two great Hellenistic leagues resulted in failure and the death of the likely commander of that expedition, Margos of Karyneia.¹⁶⁸ As the probable leading voice in favor of the Aetolian alliance, his death freed Aratus from strong domestic criticism of his larger Peloponnesian focus. In his political prime and elated with recent successes, Aratus would naturally continue to pressure neighbors even if it were not part of a fully conceived plan to unite the Peloponnese. An opportunist as most successful political leaders are, Aratus continued his policies of aggressive pressure upon neighboring states.

¹⁶⁵Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 3.4. Much of this life was sourced from Phylarchus.

¹⁶⁶Polybius, 2.42.6, the apotheosis of the League is the dissemination of unity and liberty throughout the Peloponnesus.

¹⁶⁷The campaign ending in the Spartan victory at Lyceum. Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 5.1, *Aratus*, 36.1.

¹⁶⁸Polybius, 2.10.5. Based on his dying on the only reported quinquereme, instead of the other quadriremes.

Macedonian influence had waned, and though they had made attempts to reestablish their position, they failed without the solid base the Acrocorinth offered.¹⁶⁹ The Achaeans had usurped their position within the Peloponnesus. If a state, particularly one ruled by a tyrant, wished peace in the peninsula, then it had to make arrangements with the Achaeans. The states which remained outside the bounds of the Achaean League were those which had remained largely beyond Macedonian control and free from tyrants: Elis, Messene and Sparta.¹⁷⁰ As counterintuitive as it is to the Polybian description of a League bounded in equality and democracy,¹⁷¹ the Achaeans found their success in manipulating and perpetuating the system which the Macedonians had created.

¹⁶⁹ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 34.1, Bithys, general of Demetrius II, defeated Aratus at the Battle of Phylacia. This is the only Macedonian action mentioned not preformed by Greek tyrants. It may well have been a rebuff to Achaean advances, but it does show the Macedonians were not giving up completely, and that they could still bring force enough, when they wished to, to win battles. This entry occurs during the description of Aratan raids on Athens.

¹⁷⁰ Messenia and Sparta would in time be brought into the Achaean League, but only after conquest, and they did not remain permanent members. Messenia would ally with Achaea for its own reasons on a few occasions, but did not join until it had been captured by Lycortus, Pausanias, 4.29.12.

¹⁷¹ Democracy in the negative: not monarchy or tyranny in any form.

CHAPTER III

MEANS OF ACHAEAN UNITY

Federal Institutions under Aratus

The renewed Achaean League stood at the height of its independent power and reputation in the summer of 228 with its new *strategos autokrator*, Aristomachus of Argos. The institutions which had brought them to this place were: the army, federal office, an egalitarian political model which included equal political, legal and economic rights as well as the binding agents of a common League ideology and common cult. These were imperfect instruments of unity, but they had cobbled together many disparate poleis within the fractious Peloponnesus under the banner of the Achaeans.

The League's main coercive tool was, far and away, its military. The federal levy was composed of the individual levies of its various constituents. Just as in classical Greece, the central expression of civic virtue was service within the levy. At this moment in the narrative, Achaean forces have had numerous successes, mainly derived through the clever stratagems of their commanders such as Aratus, or Diaetas.¹⁷² There

¹⁷²Polyaenus, 2.36. The reason for Diaetas' entry in the *Strategemata* was his clever use of trumpets to convince the populace his force was much larger than it was, and thus, resistance was futile. But this trick was only after he had already covertly made copies of the gate keys and handed them out to individual supporters in the polis.

was a garrison at the Acrocorinth at least, if not in other sites.¹⁷³ The Achaeans made use of mercenaries, but specifics are difficult to come by at this early stage. The League would later codify a certain number of standing infantry and cavalry mercenaries, but to this point they must have been hired piecemeal.¹⁷⁴

These units fought as separate units, based upon their origin. They were a heterogeneous mix of whatever the local tradition dictated. The ethnic Achaeans, as well as the Sicyonians under Aratus, were armed primarily with the smaller *thureos* shield, reflecting the tactics with which Aratus won most of his successes.¹⁷⁵ The remaining League constituents each had their own martial tradition. Some poleis might share in the *thureos* based equipment, but there is little information on the possible wide range of traditions. Assuming uniformity would be a great mistake, and there is evidence that the great poleis such as Megalopolis, maintained Macedonian style equipment typified by a heavier brazen shield.

Most references to Macedonian style Megalopolitans come from the period after the Battle of Sellasia. Fighting with Antigonos Doson, Polybius reports that the king provided the equipment which the Megalopolitans used. Five years later, they were noted as having bronze shields, just as they did at Sellasia.¹⁷⁶ The only specific mention of Megalopolitan soldiers before that battle occurred earlier in the war, during the action in which Lydiades died. Aratus had some limited success with his light troops, but would

¹⁷³Plutarch, *Aratus*, 24.1.

¹⁷⁴Polybius 4.37.5 for the gathering of mercenaries during the Social War, and 5.91.6 for the standing mercenary army of 8,000 foot and 500 horse. Walbank, *Commentary*, 486, 623

¹⁷⁵Plutarch, *Philopoemen*, 9.1.

¹⁷⁶Polybius, 5.91.7 for their brazen shields and 2.65.3 for their 1000 Macedonian armed infantry, Walbank, *Commentary*, 623. But 4.69.5 directly states that Antigonos armed them thusly, Walbank, *Commentary*, 523.

not commit his hoplites.¹⁷⁷ Lydiades, exercising his authority, led his own soldiers, horsemen, against Cleomenes. To his cavalry he called forth to his countrymen to support him, many of which heeded his call. These Megalopolitans fought and routed Cleomenes' right wing, but fell apart in broken and wooded areas.¹⁷⁸ The description is too vague for anything definitive, but its details conform to the performance one expects of a line of heavy phalangites. In a war where Achaean soldiers were routinely defeated in open battle, the Megalopolitan troops broke a part of the Spartan army.¹⁷⁹ As perennial foes to Spartan aggression, the Megalopolitans must have maintained forces capable of dealing with Spartan tactics. The tradition of heavy infantry was clearly present in Megalopolis to a greater degree than in the rest of the Achaean army.

The army was not only composed of elements with differing military traditions, but the participation of local levies was at some level dependent on the inclination of that locality, at least in the early period. The nonparticipation of certain groups is difficult to detect, but one certainly finds the incumbent *strategos* greatly affecting the employment and composition of the army. As the native polis of Aratus, Sicyon consistently bore a heavy military burden.¹⁸⁰ Their contributions were so heavy that it took an inordinate toll on their population levels. During the *strategia* of Aristomachus of Argos, the Achaean army met the Spartans at a place called Pallantium.¹⁸¹ This location was east of Megalopolis. This territory, then, was the furthest east an Achaean army appeared before

¹⁷⁷He sent in his ψιλοί, but not his 'οπλίται, Plutarch, *Aratus*, 37.1.

¹⁷⁸Plutarch, *Aratus*, 37.2-3. This account is contradicted in Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 6.3 where Lydiades only pursues the defeated Spartans with cavalry to which Cleomenes countered with Tarentines and Cretans. Polybius, 2.51.3, only refers to this battle as a defeat εκ παρατάξεως, thus one involving full battle lines, not just skirmishers, Walbank, *Commentary*, 250.

¹⁷⁹Those defeats were at Lycaenum and Hecatombaeum.

¹⁸⁰Pausanias, 2.7.4 for the grave marker from all of the battles. 8.10.6 for the explicit mention of Sicyonian and Achaean forces.

¹⁸¹Plutarch, *Aratus*, 35.5, *Cleomenes*, 4.4.

Cleomenes made his dramatic gains in the Argolid. This was probably because the new *strategos* chose to march his army through his home region to pick up Argive units and to ensure the defense of that region. Cleomenes probably moved his army to intercept them from his position in Megalopolitan territory.¹⁸²

In the field, the army was composed of various tactical units. The Achaeans conformed to the general Hellenistic trend of combined arms with their own heavy emphasis on flexible infantry. It is unclear how deep specialization ran in the Achaean citizen units; mercenaries may have supplied the specialized roles as they sometimes did in other contemporary armies.¹⁸³ Light infantry made up an important component of the Achaean army under Aratus.¹⁸⁴ His most successful military operations all involved surprise assaults on walled poleis and fortresses with light troops. The position of *hipparchos* certainly points to the importance the cavalry possessed even in the original ethnic *koinon*; Achaean cavalry continued as a present force in any major engagement and most minor ones.¹⁸⁵ And lastly, the weakest component of the Achaean military was their heavy infantry, referred to as hoplites in the general sense of that word.¹⁸⁶ Missile troops, possibly fighting as part of the light infantry, are seldom mentioned.

Mercenaries constituted a pivotal force within the Achaean army from the admission of Sicyon, and perhaps before. This is far from surprising, since Aratus had

¹⁸²Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 4.4 relates that Cleomenes had just raided the Argolid following his seizure of Methydrium.

¹⁸³Tarentine cavalry for Sparta, Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 6.3. For a greater discussion of the evolving role of mercenaries, Griffith, *Hellenistic Mercenaries*, 318-320.

¹⁸⁴Polybius, 4.12.3 εὐζῶνοις light troops, θωρακίτας for the cuirass men, who seemed to have some versatility. The Ψῖλοι in Plutarch, *Aratus*, 37.1 were noted for driving off the Spartans, one of the few direct engagements with the Spartans which Aratus is noted to have won.

¹⁸⁵Polybius, 2.65.3, the Achaeans committed 3000 foot and 300 cavalry to the Sellasia campaign, Walbank, *Commentary*, 274-5. Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 4.4, 1000 horse compared to 20,000 foot, which compares favorably to a Macedonian army of similar size 1300 horse, 20,000 foot in Plutarch, *Aratus*, 43.1.

¹⁸⁶Plutarch, *Aratus*, 24.1, the Corinthian garrison, 37.1-3 Aratus would not let them engage, Lydiades' retreat disrupts them. Polybius, 4.14.6 Aratus fails to use his hoplites properly.

direct and continuous connections to mercenary leaders from his boyhood. The actions Aratus took to depose the tyrant Nicocles included hiring a few mercenaries from the foremost of the brigands, Xenophilus.¹⁸⁷ As the League gained power and wealth, it increasingly relied upon greater mercenary forces. There are no attested figures before the Social War, but the scattered mentions make the importance of mercenaries clear.¹⁸⁸ As the Social War neared its conclusion with mixed success on the part of the Achaeans, Aratus convinced them to establish a standing force of eight thousand infantry and five hundred cavalry mercenaries. This is compared to 3300 citizen forces.¹⁸⁹ The dependence on mercenary forces overburdened the League's finances, and allowed it to afford its army only in good times.¹⁹⁰

The person who led this martial force was the *strategos autocrator*.¹⁹¹ The allure of commanding the forces of the whole League has already been directly cited as one of Aristomachus' enticements. But of course, not every tyrant could be the supreme leader of the League. Lesser posts existed, possibly with some regional significance.

The position of *hypostrategos*, literally an under general, existed both as the direct subordinate of the *strategos autocrator* and as independent commanders in their own right.¹⁹² The examples of independent command come from one particular area, the

¹⁸⁷Plutarch, *Aratus*, 6.2, Πρώτου Ξενοφίλου τῶν ἀρχικλῶπων.

¹⁸⁸Plutarch, *Aratus*, 29.4, The "Cretan" who killed Aristippus was most certainly a mercenary. 37.3, the Achaeans voted to deny Aratus funding for the mercenaries. This would not be a meaningful step without mercenaries making up an important part of the army. Polybius, 4.37.6 the Achaeans actively recruited both horse and foot mercenaries in preparation for the Social War.

¹⁸⁹Polybius, 5.91.4.

¹⁹⁰Polybius, 5.94.9 on good times. Polybius 4.60.2 on the results of bad times.

¹⁹¹The position of *nauarch*, or admiral, existed with theoretically similar prestige to the *strategos* and *hipparchos*, but little is heard of this position, or for that matter, an Achaean navy. No more than ten ships are ever discussed, Polybius, 2.9.9, Walbank, *Commentary*, 160.

¹⁹²Plutarch, *Aratus*, 29.5 for a subordinate of Aratus and Polybius, 4.59.2, Walbank, *Commentary*, 514, for a force commanded by Mikkos of Dyme, 5.94.1, Walbank, *Commentary*, 624, for Lukos of Pharae. In a much later context, but one which might point to other possible powers and responsibilities, Polybius

northwest corner of ethnic Achaean lands, around Patrae and Dyme. Here, of the two named *hypostrategoi*, both are from the region. The sources report that they command a unit called a *synteleia*, which appears to be a designated subregion within the League that is larger than a single polis. This may, however, represent a special circumstance. This region of Achaea was hard hit by Aetolian-Elean raids and may have required special consideration, or as the originators of the renewed League they may have had a historical claim to special privilege.¹⁹³ But the existence of a local subgroup commanded in each case by a local citizen represents another possible layer of authority with which to attract individual elites.

There were also the remaining federal posts which, though not strictly military, assisted in the co-option of elites from across the League. When Aratus journeyed to meet his new ally, Antigonos Doson, a group called the *demiourgoi* accompanied him.¹⁹⁴ This body was the effective executive council of the Achaean League. Heavily involved in foreign policy, the *demiourgoi* had some sort of oversight power on the *strategos autokrator* but generally stayed in the bureaucratic center of the League, Aegium.¹⁹⁵ Of the few documents which have survived with references to the *demiourgoi*, two were proxy decrees.¹⁹⁶ This power suggests that the *demiourgoi* had certain patronage powers, making this an attractive post in addition to its central role in Achaean government. One may imagine the tyrant of Phlius, Hermione or some lesser place

38.18.2 for one Sosikrates who presided over a council, διαβουλός, and was thus held responsible for its decisions and executed.

¹⁹³ Aside from the above descriptions of Mikkos of Dyme and Lukos of Pharae, in Polybius, 5.60.1-5 these poleis feel so hard pressed that they temporarily opt out of paying their taxes, and instead hire mercenaries for themselves, Walbank, *Commentary*, 514.

¹⁹⁴ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 43.1. The word, *demiourgoi*, has many alternative spellings. This is the transliterated version found at this reference.

¹⁹⁵ Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 221.

¹⁹⁶ Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 223.

serving in this capacity, where they might continue to maintain themselves in their home poleis through the greater patronage resources of the League.

Further down the scale, the Achaeans possessed a number of lesser offices, and also the League legislative bodies. All complex societies have lower level functionary positions and places for legislative back benchers. Hellenic poleis certainly possessed such positions, but the increasing number of federal posts served to bind more individuals to the federal state, just as the top federal positions bound the formally parochial premier leaders. These positions were often the federal extensions of preexisting polis practice. There were the boards of *nomographoi*, or law writers.¹⁹⁷ And there seemed to be a body of standing judges which were empaneled as necessary.¹⁹⁸ Other low level posts existed in the federal treasury, with one confirmed treasurer.¹⁹⁹ This position was fairly unimportant due to the rudimentary nature of regular Achaean finances, even by the nature of the Hellenistic age.²⁰⁰ And of course there were opportunities for individual involvement with the federal state in the legislature.

There were two legislative bodies, the representative *boule* and the primary legislature, the *ekklesia*. Though democratic in form, these bodies were functionally oligarchic, most likely passed down from the original Achaean institutions developed in 417 and strengthened in 367 BCE. The most striking example of a statutory limit on participation within the primary legislature was the unusually high age requirement of

¹⁹⁷Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 235. These *nomographoi* met regularly to revise federal law.

¹⁹⁸Polybius, 38.18.3 for the creation of a tribunal to try Sosicrates. This evidence is very late in the League's existence, and one may expect less development in an earlier period.

¹⁹⁹Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 232.

²⁰⁰There were hardly any regular taxes, only emergency levies.

thirty years of age.²⁰¹ Additionally, though not directly attested, there very well may have been a property qualification to full political participation. The general low number of total theoretical hoplites during the heyday of the League, 30 to 40000, suggests this.²⁰² Population drain does not fully explain the losses from a region which actually fielded armies of this size and larger during the Classical period. Since military service and political rights were commonly tied, the hoplite population must correspond to the politically active population.

Aside from the formal laws regulating membership, the legislative organs of the Achaean League were functionally oligarchic. The ultimate sovereignty of the League rested *de jure* in the full *ekklesia*.²⁰³ This was the body where all citizens could theoretically exercise their full civic right to weigh in on federal policy. But the practical limitations of transportation skewed participation to those individual Achaeans with the economic means to both take the time away from gainful economic activity and travel to the assembly site. This arrangement also favored those League citizens who lived the closest to the assembly site, which was still at this period normally held in Aegium.²⁰⁴ Extraordinary meetings occasionally met in other locations, but for the most part the proximity to Aegium contributed to one's ability to influence policy.

²⁰¹Polybius, 29.24.6. Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 88. Fine, *Ancient Greeks*, 151, corresponds to the Spartan requirement for their primary assembly. This is perhaps another example of the deep influence Sparta had on the conservative Achaean constitution.

²⁰²Polybius, 29.24.8, this was in the context of sending a small force, 1200 men, to Egypt during the Third Macedonian War. Polybius relates how he himself argued to the Achaean *boule* that such a force in no way impaired the Achaeans ability to help the Romans, should they call, given their aforementioned strength. Walbank, *Commentary III*, 401.

²⁰³This conclusion, never explicitly stated, comes from the ultimate authority for declaring war, which the *ekklesia* retained, even as its other powers were stripped. Polybius 22.12.6 where the Achaeans explain a constitutional bind to the Romans. Walbank, *Commentary III*, 197.

²⁰⁴Plutarch, *Aratus*, 37.3, when Aratus was forced to return to Aegium to receive a reprimand in 225. *Aratus* 42.1-2 The assembly which agrees to send to Antigonos Doson for aid. Polybius, 2.54.3 Aratus attends the federal council in the early stages of the Cleomenic War. This is all contrasted with a later law which changed the meeting place, discussed in Chapter IV below.

The second legislative body, which might be considered derivative of the first, was the *boule*. Although the *boule* was a critically important body of the Achaean government, much remains unknown such as size and composition. Analogous *boulai* numbered into the hundreds and in federal contexts was often composed of proportionally representative delegates.²⁰⁵ These analogies are more persuasive in that the Achaeans assessed their extraordinary taxes, *eisphora*, based upon a proportional system.²⁰⁶ In every other federal analogue, the proportion was based not on actual population numbers, but on the amount of representation a particular locality had in the federal *boule*.²⁰⁷ The system reflected population in as much as a greater population could support higher taxes. The stresses of the Cleomenean War and later, the Social War, revolutionized the relationship between these two legislative bodies, and rendered them truly separate.

On the one hand, the *ekklesia* was the font of true sovereignty, while the *boule* acted as a kind of steering committee. In both name and function these two bodies corresponded to the Athenian *boule* and *ekklesia*, only on a federal scale.²⁰⁸ And just as in the Athenian case, the Achaean *boule* assumed greater importance as time passed. Only in certain circumstances did the *boule* operate as a legislature in its own right. The *boule* had already developed an independent authority before the reorganization of the League, probably under the influence of Spartan pressure. The earliest reference to an Achaean governmental apparatus comes from an inscription which mentions the *demiourgoi* and the *boule* in the context of a treaty with a “Coronea.”²⁰⁹ While ultimate

²⁰⁵Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 226.

²⁰⁶Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 233. The only direct evidence for taxation comes from the time that a few cities did not pay it. Polybius, 4.60.4 Dyme, Pharae and Tritaea would not pay their common payment, κοινὰς εἰσφορὰς.

²⁰⁷Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 233.

²⁰⁸Sealey, *History of the Greek City States*, 156.

²⁰⁹Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 86.

decisions of peace and war remained with the *ekklesia*, as it would down to the final dissolution of the League, the minutia of diplomatic agreements were ceded to the *boule*. A good example of the relationship between the two bodies occurred during the opening of the Cleomenean War. Aratus, in his capacity as *strategos autokrator*, convened the leading men of government²¹⁰ to decide overall policy against Cleomenes. This group included the *boule*. As the Spartans escalated their hostile behavior, a full meeting of the Achaeans was convened which declared open war.²¹¹ During the full meeting, the *boule* probably acted as a steering committee. The *boule* had a certain freedom to act, along with the executive leadership, but on the issues of war and large troop deployments, the *ekklesia* was required.

Beyond federal posts which could only appeal to the loyalty of Achaean political elites, the Achaean League had a range of other civic benefits. The Achaean application of citizenship and federalism stood out from the Hellenic world, and fostered the long term unity of the League. Each federal citizen possessed legal and property rights throughout the League, and each League constituent theoretically possessed equal political rights. The practicalities of demographics and geography dictated that certain League constituents were better positioned to take advantage of federal institutions, but in theory every polis or *mera* had an equivalent share of political power.

Any male citizen of the Achaean League over the age of thirty could fully participate in the affairs of state. He could attend the *ekklesia* by right, or find himself selected for the *boule* if found worthy by his polis. But should he live too far away from

²¹⁰Polybius, 2.46.4, οἱ προεστῶτες τοῦ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν πολιτεύματος. Walbank, *Commentary I*, 243.

²¹¹Polybius, 2.46.6, the key phrase being, συναθροίσαντες τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς ἔκριναν μετὰ τῆς βουλῆς. The leading men, still the subject, gathered together the Achaeans, *along with the boule*, which was already in session. Walbank, *Commentary I*, 244.

Aegium and lacked the time or resources to make the trip, he found himself divorced from League policy. He was also liable for military service, but was rarely called up unless the enemy passed near his polis or he was unlucky enough to be a Sicyonian. If he were a man of great means, he might serve in a federal post. But unless he was a close political ally of Aratus, he could not hope to attain the highest offices.

Beyond the political rights of an Achaeon, each citizen had certain reciprocal rights, such as to property, intermarriage and legal redress. All of these existed during the early League. In the initial stages, however, only the elites could make much use of these prerogatives. Aratus is reported to have owned a house in Corinth,²¹² but he was literally at the top of Achaeon political society. Evidence exists for another early Achaeon citizen, Heiro of Aegeira, having owned property in Argos.²¹³ Within the ethnic Achaeon homeland, there may have been greater participation in these rights initially, since they had long enjoyed them. But they would prove critical over the long term to binding the propertied classes of the new member states.

Reciprocal marriage rights were a very concrete tool of unity. Instead of intangible notions of general kinship within an *ethne*, marriage would create an actual kinship tie. This exchange of privileges occurred in a number of places throughout the Hellenistic, and the earlier Hellenic world, and was not unique to the Achaeon League. Their contemporaries, the Aetolians, granted it to members of their League, and are recorded exchanging these rights with nonmember allied states such as the Acarnanians.²¹⁴ This exchange, termed *epigamia* in Greek, was granted quite frequently between specific poleis and either individuals or other favored poleis. The Achaeans

²¹²Plutarch, *Aratus*, 41.2.

²¹³Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 239 derived from SIG³ 675.

²¹⁴Scholten, *Politics of Plunder*, 79.

simply generalized the concept, eliminating the need for legislative action on each new extension.

These concrete benefits were essential to the durability of the League, but they existed alongside other less tangible unifying forces. The origins of a Hellenic *koinon* lay in the unity of individual *ethne*. The revolutionary aspects of the Achaean model existed within, not outside of that core tradition. The incorporation of disparate poleis into a single political organization was astounding, but the whole process was cloaked in the traditional ethnic framework. Each new member swore to take the name and ancestral laws of the Achaeans, hence becoming Achaeans. In a strict technical sense, the League was merely incorporating consanguine peoples just as they had during the reformation of the League before Aratus. This is, of course, preposterous, but the gesture was clearly deeply meaningful to the Achaeans. The assertion of a fictional kinship would be insufficient for stability on its own, but it provided the intellectual and religious underpinning for the quite radical step which so many poleis took.

This assertion of kinship took the form of an oath sworn by the representatives of the joining locality and the elected leadership of Achaea. The best example for this is the Orchomenean decree, dated to 234 BCE which shows how the new League constituents had to become “Achaeans.”²¹⁵ This language is mirrored in Polybius’ description of the Achaean League in his second book.²¹⁶ Clearly, League ideology posited that all members, regardless of their former *ethnos* affiliation, were brought into the greater whole of the Achaean nation. Unfortunately for the unity of the League, this oath, while

²¹⁵Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 310. P. J. Rhodes with David M. Lewis, *Decrees of the Greek States* (New York: 1997), 98 γιγνόντι τῶι κοινῶι τῶι τῶν Ἀχαιῶν.

²¹⁶Polybius, 2.38.4. Walbank, *Commentary I*, 221.

important, was far from completely successful in eliminating particularism. The practical application of this sworn integration came in a few tangible forms.

Moving from the least to perhaps the ultimate in tangible objects, coinage has long been the most ubiquitous medium available to premodern states for the expression of political values. Minted coins were the most often seen and utilized work of government artists. The artwork on either side of the coin presented the goals or ideals of the minting authority. Achaean practice was no different. Achaean coinage reflected the unique federal system which they had developed, allowing for some autonomy but also a mark of federal unity. There was no federal mint; each polis had the right to coin, but to the federal standard. The reverse of a League coin, most commonly an Aeginetan Triobol, contained both the League monogram and that of the minting polis.²¹⁷ This practice admirably asserted League political values. While maintaining local traditions in iconography, the polis also asserted its participation in the greater whole.

In clear demonstration of how much competition the League had for local loyalties, most poleis continued to mint their own, local coins without reference to the League. In coin hoards twice as many pieces have been found marked as purely Argive coins than with the federal monogram in addition to local Argive features. In a similar vein, coins with the symbol of the Arcadian League make up a surprisingly large number.²¹⁸ These reflect the continued local pride felt by most Peloponnesians. Even the Arcadian League symbol makes good sense when one considers Megalopolis. As a relative parvenu among the ancient cities of Arcadia, the reason for Megalopolis'

²¹⁷Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 234. Examples of several Aeginetan triobols appear in the appendix.

²¹⁸Margaret Thompson, "A Hoard of Greek Federal Silver," *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, vol. 8, no. 2 (Apr.–Jun., 1939), 144.

founding was to serve as the capital of a united Arcadia. This local variation is important, but it is also important to note that they still struck to the federal standard.

The integration of the Achaean economy, as facilitated by common weights and civil freedom of movement, was both a tangible economic benefit as well as another intangible connection between member states. The internal migration of propertied elites, as opposed to laborers, could not help but solidify the political class within the Peloponnese. This was a long-term process, and during Aratus' tenure as leading statesman it had not yet come to pass. But the economic motives to migrate slowly wrought a changed view of the greater Achaean citizenry. Through everyday good dealings with members of another community, individual Corinthians, Argives, Sicyonians or others came to identify a bit more with his fellow Achaeans when compared to other, more foreign groups.

Another point of common association was common religious practice. As it had been before the reorganization, the political and religious center of the Achaean League was the polis of Aegium and the precinct of Zeus Homarius. As previously noted, regular sessions of the *ekklesia* were held in Aegium, though with emergency sessions taking place elsewhere. Additionally, as new members joined the League, they must have participated in the activities of the federal cult at the precinct of Zeus Homarius. What effect this participation had on the minds of new members is immeasurable. The Homarion faced much competition for the allegiance of new citizens. Argos, Corinth and even the parvenu, Megalopolis, had local cults with far more influence on local minds.

But over time, just as with the civil, economic and legal rights, Zeus Homarius did find a wider acceptance and helped bind the League together.²¹⁹

Each of these institutions were internal to the League and helped it grow and prosper. The League also existed in a particular international environment, which pressed on League constituents and League targets. The most influential of these pressures of course came from the Hellenistic monarchies. As the largest political bodies of their day, these kingdoms could, if they focused on an area, make all local developments moot. Their armies could destroy any of the communities of Greece. They too, however, had their own concerns to worry about, mostly each other. In the Achaean context the most notable aspect of royal influence became financial.

Subsidies from the Hellenistic monarchs underlined much of the character of Achaean institutions. Monies were directed either at an individual, or toward a state project through the good offices of a particular native citizen.²²⁰ This concentration of wealth in few hands directly contributed to the establishment of the tyrannical elite. In a critical way, the corresponding reduction in importance of lesser individuals created the circumstances where a few might have the option of redefining themselves into both locally preeminent and also loyal to a greater political body.

The transformational power of wealth has a long and obvious pedigree. From the Hellenic context, however, the examples of first the Persian king, and then Philip II of Macedonia give analogues to this development. The Persians had large stores of specie. As the principle Greek states of the day were democratic poleis, Persia would, in addition

²¹⁹More on this below, in Chapter IV.

²²⁰Burstein, *The Hellenistic Age*, 13 on Philippides, friend of Lysimachus, obtaining gifts for Athens from the King. 18 for a ransom request to Lysimachus. See Chapter II pages 24 and 26 for the instances of direct subsidies to Aratus.

to direct subsidies to states, would directly bribe leading politicians.²²¹ Philip II did not have as large a store of precious metals, but he did have large grazing lands and flocks of animals. While contending with his primary Greek antagonist, Athens, he gifted herds of cattle, horses and sheep to certain politicians of limited means.²²² Through his shrewd gift, Philip instantly elevated these men to elite status, leapfrogging them past other politicians whose family holdings in Attica, though impressive locally, could obviously not compare to the gifts of the Macedonian king. This strategy, whether used as efficiently as Philip II, continued to reshape local power dynamics, just as it had done in Athens.

Achaemenid Persia and Philip II elevated some politicians in some cities to help shape local politics. But the sudden deluge of gold and silver into the Greek homeland following the exploits of Alexander III transformed Greek political life. The liberality of Alexander III and his successors toward their soldiers instantly elevated their status, and anyone connected to them.²²³ But much specie was retained at royal courts. So important was this wealth that the basis of the Kingdom of Pergamum's independence rested on a 9000 talent treasury which happened to be in the city.²²⁴ This wealth, when directed at individuals in Greece, elevated them far above their fellow citizens. These individuals could use their new wealth to hire mercenaries and secure their position as tyrants of their localities. This did not eliminate the need for local support. The narrative of the revolving door of Sicyonian tyrants indicates that more than mercenaries were

²²¹As just one example, Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 3.5.1 describes the bribery of key politicians in key poleis which led directly to the Corinthian War.

²²²Timothy Howe, *Pastoral Politics: Animals, Agriculture and Society in Ancient Greece*, (Claremont, California: 2008), 45.

²²³M. Rostovstef, *The Social & Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, (Oxford: 1961), 130.

²²⁴Strabo, 13.4.1.

necessary for stability. But this tyrannical elite did weaken the local citizenry to the point where their assent was less important. These new conditions were critical to the initial unity of the Achaean League. This lowered threshold of civic assent, as much as any other factor, allowed fractious Peloponnesian poleis to join in a common government.

These institutions complemented admirably the strategies employed by Aratus in expanding the renewed League. Each institution had something to contribute to the overall emphasis on tyrannical elites. Aratus' first instinct was to dominate through his military. Luckily, when this proved too difficult for League resources, the other institutions served commendably to entice these tyrants to join Achaean ranks. These tyrants were, for decades, the preeminent political actors in their poleis due to their elevation by the wealth of the Hellenistic monarchies.

Aratan Strategies of Unity

The tyrannical elite, established and maintained by Macedonian arms, was the principle target of Achaean foreign policy. Both carrots and sticks were employed toward these ends, with the treatment of Lydiades of Megalopolis and the tyrants of Argos serving as the best examples. Taking the Argives first, Aratus targeted both the elder Aristomachus and Aristippus specifically for assassination. And though Plutarch says it was some slave, one cannot rule out that Aratus had a hand in Aristomachus' murder.²²⁵ During his relentless attacks on Argos, already described, Aratus arranged to lure Aristippus into an attack on Cleonae. The tactics to this point were typical of Aratan warfare, but once the two forces had joined battle Aratus singled out and pursued

²²⁵Plutarch, *Aratus*, 25.1-4.

Aristippus to his death.²²⁶ His successor, Aristomachus, chose a different path within a few years, joining the League. His decision could not have been unaffected by the recent deaths of his father and grandfather.

The narrative of the Argive tyrants is given fairly full coverage, but the decision of Lydiades is presented as wise and independent, coming from a man of noble lineage.²²⁷ This misses the Achaean intimidation which must have had a great influence.²²⁸ The Achaean army had already annexed territory deep into Arcadia.²²⁹ And just as in the case of the Argives, Aratus probably sent assassins after Lydiades. Plutarch asserts Aratus was laying plots just as Lydiades made his decision to renounce tyranny.²³⁰ Whether it was truly gratitude, or whether negotiations had taken place ahead of time, the addition of Megalopolis to the League was followed in the next election with the selection of Lydiades as *strategos autokrator*.

Power was the primary carrot for the tyrannical elite. Megalopolis and Argos were powerful cities, and the only allure the League possessed was the offer of greater power still. Aratus was the example of a single man exerting disproportionate influence throughout the League. During the negotiations for Aristomachus to unite his polis to the League, Aratus pointed to the example of Lydiades, and the opportunity the Argive would have to become *strategos* of a state more powerful than his own.²³¹ The choice

²²⁶Plutarch, *Aratus*, 29.3-4. A Cretan named Tragiscus preformed the deed. Coming from a land noted for mercenaries and described as thus explicitly not Achaean, he may merely be a soldier for hire, or perhaps a hired sword tasked specifically with Aristippus' death.

²²⁷This comes across most strongly in Polybius, 2.44.4-5, Walbank, *Commentary*, 238. Plutarch, *Aratus*, 30.1-2, presents a few reasons, most prominently a mature ruler's prudent plan to better his polis, and gain renown, but also another covered below.

²²⁸Walbank, *Aratos*, 62 for a similar analysis, discussing the capture of Herea, the threats to his life, and the wish to better his polis.

²²⁹Polyaenus, 2.36.

²³⁰Plutarch, *Aratus*, 30.1.

²³¹Plutarch, *Aratus*, 35.1.

was stark: death or constitutional ruler over a greater territory. This choice was all the more compelling if one did not truly have to give up one's tyranny, as Aratus had clearly not done in Sicyon.

There is good evidence that this was the case. Lydiades continued to be the leading citizen of Megalopolis. During the Cleomenean War, the Spartans were encamped outside of Megalopolis. Aratus, the serving *strategos autokrator*, did not elect to attack. But Lydiades called upon the army of his polis and attacked the Spartans, where he ultimately fell.²³² His death obscures his continued dominance in Megalopolis. Aristomachus controlled Argos after it joined the League, but he lived to see Aratus shut him out of power. As the war deteriorated for the Achaeans, Aristomachus made another decision. Just as he had joined the League when it suited him, Argos opened its gates to Cleomenes III when the tide of events favored the Spartans.²³³ Polybius accuses Aristomachus of turning Argos over to Cleomenes at the time when the League needed his support the most.²³⁴ Returning to the stick, Aratus and the Achaeans put him to death once they had recaptured Argos, demonstrating that they felt he bore the guilt for the defection of that polis.²³⁵

As counterintuitive as it may seem, Aratus had made the Peloponnese safe for tyrants, but only anti-Macedonian ones. Through aggressively courting the tyrannical elite, the League acquired not only the big prizes of Megalopolis and Argos, but also Hermione, Phlius and other undocumented poleis which certainly were governed by

²³²Plutarch, *Aratus*, 37.1-3.

²³³Polybius, 2.52.2, Walbank, *Commentary*, 251-3. Plutarch, *Aratus*, 39.4, Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 17.4, where the Achaean mercenaries were sent to Corinth and Sicyon, perhaps an action suggested by Aristomachus.

²³⁴Polybius, 2.60.6, Walbank, *Commentary*, 266.

²³⁵Polybius, 2.60.1-7, Walbank, *Commentary*, 266.

tyrants. The Achaean League did not displace Macedonian garrisons, it had replaced them. After paroling his Macedonian mercenaries, Aristomachus could rely at tense moments on Achaean mercenaries. Aratus could maintain his position in Sicyon, a polis which had seen a revolving door of tyrants, with authority from the League in addition to soldiers. Though their rhetoric was diametrically opposed to this notion, the Achaeans, at least at that point, were held together through the consensus of tyrants.

The Limitations of Aratus

This clear focus on the tyrannical elite sheds light on the failures of the Aratan system. Polities with regimes which shared power among any number of citizens greater than one maintained their independence from the Achaeans. By 228 only Elis, Messene and Sparta remained independent in the Peloponnese. Just outside the peninsula, Athens also stood aloof despite continuous pressure from Aratus. The tactics developed to appeal to a single ruling individual had much less force over these more democratic states.

In addition to the detailed narrative of Aratus' advances on Argos, Plutarch spends much time on his equally obsessive raids on Attica. With Megara and Aegina already a part of the League, Athens was as much the next step as Argos. While Athens conformed in many ways to the usual Achaean target, it retained a fundamental difference. Aratus had a single responsible target for his usual tactics, Diogenes, the Macedonian garrison commander.²³⁶ But underlying Macedonian force was a still effective Athenian self-governing class. Athenian civic institutions had not atrophied in

²³⁶Plutarch, *Aratus*, 34.4.

the hundred years of intermittent Macedonian interference. This civic tradition was fully capable of taking over from the outgoing Diogenes.

Elis and Messene generally escaped Achaean aggression on account of their position as clients of Aetolia.²³⁷ Sparta similarly was in alliance, or at least friendly to the Achaean League. Past relations were no guarantee of safety, however. When conditions were propitious, Aratus attacked Elis. One could argue that Cleomenes III began the conflict which would bear his name. Sparta attacked Achaean territory first, and Cleomenes's ambition was certainly extensive enough on its own. Aratus' response, however, to the fortification of disputed territory was a raid on Orchomenus and Tegea, equipped with scaling ladders.²³⁸ He attempted to slip away unnoticed when the attack failed, indicating that he knew that Cleomenes' actions did not warrant his response. Aratus' first instinct was always to attack.

Bold attacks heralded his career, first in Sicyon than later at Corinth. Negotiation was always a second resort or worse. The personal theme one detects in Aratus is his need to dominate affairs. His military and political tactics are best suited to aid Achaea in the environment of tyrants, but they aided himself most of all. One may speculate on his motives, but as the leader of a relatively small polis, Sicyon, Aratus needed to maintain his authority in the face of the more powerful new members of the League. The best result of the expansion, from Aratus' perspective, was Corinth. A powerful polis in the fourth century and earlier, Corinth had suffered greatly under Macedonian

²³⁷ Although there is reason to believe that Achaea had already begun to encroach upon Messenia. Sometime before 220 BCE Pylos was considered an area of League interest, since it was worthy of mention beside regular League members, Polybius, 4.25.4.

²³⁸ Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 4.1-2.

domination. Aratus “freed” the city, yet there is no mention of any Corinthians in League service. Aratus effectively neutered the polis with his garrison on the Acrocorinth.

Aratus could not effectively influence democratic states, nor would he permit himself to diminish in influence. These weaknesses were hidden, so long as Aratus contended with his tyrannical neighbors of similar resources. Achaea reached the natural limits of his system just as a resurgent Sparta rose to challenge Achaean dominance in the Peloponnese. The tactics at which he excelled were mismatched against his Spartan opponent. Cleomenes III proved too tough to defeat, and too domineering to come to a peaceful agreement. There could be no repeat of the integration of Lydiades or Aristomachus. The subsequent conflict would expose the shallow nature of League loyalty, and expose the faults of its great statesman.

CHAPTER IV

COLLAPSE AND BROADENING OF LEAGUE SUPPORT

As the Achaean polity absorbed new members and expanded its power through strategies of elite co-option, reforming kings came to the throne in Sparta and led that ancient polity back into relevance. The timing was inauspicious for Peloponnesian unity, as that peninsula was too small for two growing rivals. The ejection of Macedonian influence and the shifted focus of Aetolian politics left the stage set for a confrontation. The war would expose Achaean weakness, but its result would grant the League the long-term space to develop a system to incorporate a more broad-based swath of its citizenry.

The Cleomenean War

As Thucydides might phrase it, the underlying cause of the Cleomenean War was the growing power of Achaea and Sparta. There have already been many allusions to the beginning of the war. Cleomenes received or seized the eastern Arcadian poleis and fortified the Athenaeum, a temple in the disputed territory of the Belbina.²³⁹ This was followed by an Achaean invasion, headed by the newly elected *strategos*, Aristomachus. Prevented from offering battle by Aratus, though they outnumbered the Spartans four to

²³⁹Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 4.1, Polybius, 2.46.5, Walbank, *Commentary*, 243-44.

one, the Achaeans withdrew.²⁴⁰ In the next year, with Aratus as *strategos*, the Achaeans raided Elis but found a Spartan army present, which defeated them. This defeat was compensated by the surprise attack and capture of Mantinea.²⁴¹ Another embarrassing defeat occurred in front of Megalopolis, but a Spartan attack near Orchomenus was defeated, and its commander captured.²⁴²

To this point Cleomenes III had mixed success against the Achaeans, and for the most part their state held together well. Disagreements among the ruling elite, especially between Aratus and Lydiades of Megalopolis, created enough disunion for Cleomenes to win more victories than he might have otherwise.²⁴³ But the threat was not serious enough for those disagreements to spell doom, as Cleomenes could only muster as many as 5000 men at best.²⁴⁴ The major Achaean defeat at Lycaeum had some compensation in the surprise capture of Mantinea from Spartan control. After the Spartan victory at Laodicea, before Megalopolis itself, there were recriminations within the League, but without any real loss of territory.²⁴⁵ This situation was radically altered with Cleomenes' seizure of absolute authority in Sparta and the enrollment of several thousand more citizens.

The king opened the following campaign season with the recapture of Mantinea. In keeping with his typically bold plans, Cleomenes took this opportunity to invade western Achaea. At Hecatombaeum, near Dyme, he inflicted the most serious defeat the

²⁴⁰Plutarch, *Aratus*, 35.4-5, *Cleomenes*, 4.4.

²⁴¹Plutarch, *Aratus*, 36.2, *Cleomenes*, 5.1.

²⁴²Plutarch, *Aratus*, 37.1-3 for Megalopolis, 38.1 on the battle in which Megistonous, stepfather of Cleomenes III, was captured, Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 6.3-4.

²⁴³Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 4.4. Plutarch, *Aratus*, 37.1. Lydiades wished to continue the pursuit after a successful Aratus led sortie. Aratus demurs; Lydiades charges forth anyway, to his death and the defeat of his forces.

²⁴⁴Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 4.5.

²⁴⁵Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 316.

Achaean had yet experienced. Cleomenes defeated the full Achaean citizen levy, and in the aftermath of this defeat the Achaeans essentially sued for peace.²⁴⁶ Aratus and Cleomenes negotiated in good faith, and there was a real prospect of a settlement. But due to circumstances and the temperaments of each statesmen, peace was not established. Each blamed the other for the failure, but while Cleomenes had done much to silence any opposition he had in Sparta, Aratus was at his lowest ebb politically.

After the breakdown of these talks, the subsequent year's campaign season saw the collapse of the Achaean position. From Mantinea, which had recently fallen back into his hands, Cleomenes began the campaign with a strike on Sicyon, believing there were traitors willing to turn the city over to him. When this failed he turned to the west and sacked the ethnically Achaean city of Pellene.²⁴⁷ Argos invited Cleomenes into their walls; Phlius and Cleonae accepted garrisons. The Corinthians, despite Aratus' actual physical presence in the city, bent over backwards to ingratiate themselves to Cleomenes. Though not stated, the Corinthians had clearly had enough of the domination of Aratus.²⁴⁸ The remainder of the Argolid followed suite in quick succession.²⁴⁹ All that remained to Aratus and his Achaeans was the original Achaean homeland, his home city of Sicyon, and Megalopolis and its dependents.

At the high tide of his success, Cleomenes besieged Sicyon, very likely confident of ultimate victory. But after all his victories, and the many poleis that had voluntarily

²⁴⁶ Polybius, 2.51.3. Polybius notes the defeat of the full force, but he gives this defeat, with two others, as the reason for Aratus finally calling in Antigonus Doson. Walbank, *Commentary*, 250. Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 14.2, *Aratus*, 39.1. contains the battle, plus the capture of Langon, and the subsequent negotiations between Cleomenes and the League.

²⁴⁷ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 39.3. It is curious that this episode is absent from the Life of Cleomenes.

²⁴⁸ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 40.2, the citizens of Corinth did their best to seize and kill Aratus, *Cleomenes*, 19.4 they gave all of his property to Cleomenes III.

²⁴⁹ Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 19.1-3. *Aratus*, 39.4. for Argos and Phlius. Pellene was abandoned after the sack. Polybius 2.52.2. lists the cities of the Argolid as having gone over to Cleomenes thanks to his earlier victories. Walbank, *Commentary*, 251-252.

surrendered or which he had stormed, Cleomenes could not break Sicyon. Reaffirming the axiom that ancient cities tend to withstand a siege unless betrayed from within, Sicyon withstood the might of the Spartan army for three months.²⁵⁰ The dire straits in which the Achaeans found themselves resulted in what had been unthinkable, the request for aid from the Macedonians. The armies of Antigonus Doson swept Cleomenes out of the Argolid, and placed the Achaeans into a subordinate position from which they never recovered.

Explanations of the Achaean Collapse

The causes of this near total collapse of the Achaean position deserve careful scrutiny. The first and most basic answer might be that the Spartans were truly militarily superior, a proposition which has much evidence for it. Even before his reforms, Cleomenes III defeated the Achaeans at Lycaeum and Ladoceia.²⁵¹ After he augmented his phalanx with his newly enfranchised Spartiates, he won the smashing victory at Hecatombaeum. However, as the siege of Sicyon demonstrates, the Spartans need not have captured so many cities as they did; while the Achaean field army was clearly in a shambles, this did not affect the integrity of the walls of Argos or any other city.

The idea that the revolutionary programs of Cleomenes inspired oppressed Achaean citizens to favor the Spartans has been popular with many modern historians. Aside from modern preoccupation with class struggle, however, the only direct ancient testimony is a comment by Plutarch. Since so much scholarly opinion has turned on Plutarch's comment, it bears quoting in full.

²⁵⁰ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 41.4.

²⁵¹ Polybius, 2.51.3. Walbank, *Commentary I*, 250.

Now, there had been agitation among the Achaeans, and their cities were eager for revolt, the common people expecting division of land and abolition of debts, and the leading men in many cases being dissatisfied with Aratus, and some of them also enraged at him for bringing Macedonians into Peloponnesus.²⁵² Plainly stated, the proletariat yearned for economic assistance, and the leading men, oblivious to class concerns, turned on patriotic pride. This explanation has a certain resonance in today's world, given the power of class consciousness in the modern era. In the context of Plutarch's *Lives*, such a statement has another, separate resonance. Writing during the apex of the Roman Empire, Plutarch was privy to Roman historical traditions, including the Conflict of the Orders. Plutarch was writing the biographies of famous Romans as well as Greeks, and the conflict was self-evident there.

Greece certainly had problems with economically disadvantaged citizens. The Archaic Age is replete with struggles over debt. Additionally, during the height of the Peloponnesian War, parties divided roughly along class lines, democrats and oligarchs. They routinely invited in either Athens or Sparta, depending on their political affiliation. But even in the classical period, alliances hardly conformed to the party line. Athens had no compunction about attacking a democratic Syracuse when they thought it suited them. Since that time of dubious class conflict, the Hellenistic power struggles had neutered democratic factions across Greece. The new organizing principle of different factions was in support or opposition to one of the Hellenistic monarchies. Instead of just describing the facts, while paralleling famous Greeks and Romans, Plutarch had a positive interest in making these similarities seem more apparent. He directly pairs the

²⁵² Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 17.3. ἐγγόνει δὲ κίνημα τῶν Ἀχαιῶν, καὶ πρὸς ἀπόστασιν ὥρμησαν αἱ πόλεις, τῶν μὲν δήμων νομὴν τε χώρας καὶ χρεῶν ἀποκοπὰς ἐλπιδόντων, τῶν δὲ πρώτων πολλαχοῦ βαρυνομένων τὸν Ἄρατον, ἐνίων δὲ καὶ δι' ὀργῆς ἐχόντων ὡς ἐπάγοντα τῇ Πελοποννήσῳ Μακεδόνας. Walbank, *Commentary*, 252, asserts that Plutarch is following Phylarchos here.

reforming Spartans, Agis IV and Cleomenes III with the Roman revolutionary Tribunes, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus.²⁵³

There is a better alternative explanatory force among the sources. The closest contemporary source available, Polybius, does not mention lower-class sedition as a prime reason for Achaean collapse. He states the reasons quite plainly: the three battlefield defeats of Lycaenum, Lodoicea, Hecatombaeum and the decision by Ptolemy to transfer subsidy payments from Achaea to Sparta.²⁵⁴ In fact, the subsidy loss is singled out first, though chronologically it probably came last. It most logically occurred after the battle of Hecatombaeum and the public appeals for Antigonid support from certain League members.

Since it is Polybius's main explanatory fact, the role subsidies played within Peloponnesian politics bears more analysis. The general poverty of the Peloponnesus is highlighted during one of Polybius's polemics against the pro-Spartan historian, Phylarchus. Altogether, he asserts that even after the decades of prosperity at the time of his writing, there was less than 6000 talents worth of wealth. This relative affluence is contrasted to the sorry state of a region which had suffered decades of foreign depredations and internecine warfare.²⁵⁵ After the classical period, citizen levies were never sufficiently large or professional enough to hold a Greek polity sovereign under the intense pressures of the Hellenistic state system. The viability of nearly all states depended on their ability to raise and finance mercenaries. The specie with which the Hellenistic monarchies flooded the Hellenic world transformed both the internal

²⁵³ Plutarch, *Agis*, 2.6.

²⁵⁴ Polybius, 2.51.2-3. Walbank, *Commentary*, 250, asserts the winter of 226/5 as the probable time for the transfer of Ptolemaic subsidies from the Achaeans to the Spartans.

²⁵⁵ Polybius, 2.62.4. This assertion has been found plausible in Walbank, *Commentary*, 268.

workings of the poleis but also raised the bar on external threats. In the Peloponnesus, as everywhere else, more money was needed to stay in power locally and ward off foreign invaders.

In this situation, the Ptolemaic subsidies had an enormous impact on the abilities of any given state. At the start of his career, before he had established his grand reputation, Aratus received twenty-five talents from Egypt.²⁵⁶ That a little known Sicyonian adventurer could command such a sum demonstrates the enormity of Ptolemaic involvement and support of anti-Macedonian forces. Further, aside from serving in the cavalry, the next recorded service to his homeland was another mission to Ptolemy.²⁵⁷ With the judicious use of his native city's most marketable product, her art, he secured one hundred fifty talents more.²⁵⁸ In comparison, the pay for a Macedonian army of 7200 men, 6000 Macedonians and 1200 mercenaries, was fifty talents for three months, not including food rations.²⁵⁹ For the symbolic gift of several pieces of world renowned artwork, Ptolemy III had given the Achaeans the means to put a sizable army in the field for nine months.

In addition to these lump sum donations, probably far from the only ones sent, Aratus received a yearly stipend of six talents.²⁶⁰ This figure has led some to think of Ptolemy III as parsimonious in his subsidies. Given the aforementioned lump sum payments, and the pension Cleomenes III received after Antigonus III had vanquished him, twenty-four talents annually, one gets the impression that Ptolemaic subsidies were

²⁵⁶ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 11.2.

²⁵⁷ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 12.5.

²⁵⁸ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 13.4.

²⁵⁹ Polybius, 5.1.11. Walbank, *Commentary I*, 539. For the numbers of troops Philip V brought with him for that price, Polybius 5.2.11. Also, bearing in mind the earlier figure of six thousand talents for the whole Peloponnesus, 150 represents 2.5% of Peloponnesian wealth after a long period of prosperity.

²⁶⁰ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 41.3.

the main source of specie to the impoverished Peloponnese.²⁶¹ Aratus was wealthy enough to contribute twenty talents to the disbanding of Athens' Macedonian garrison.²⁶² More impressively, he was able to supply enough household silver plate and gold jewelry to hold in surety for a sixty talent loan, facilitating the seizure of the Acrocorinth.²⁶³ His personal wealth was founded on Ptolemaic gifts, and the fear of losing this sure flow of subsidies was a major reason for Aratus' rejection of Antigonid assistance.²⁶⁴

The switch of Ptolemaic subsidies from the Achaeans to Cleomenes III did not precipitate the crisis, however; it only aggravated a deteriorating situation. Had the poleis held firmly together, they might have continued to suffer some losses, but nothing as catastrophic as what actually occurred. The element that was missing was a sense of collective identity behind which the different poleis might rally. But Achaean unity to this point was crafted at an elite level, and functioned mostly through self-interest. With Achaean power collapsing, and the Achaean military establishment in a shambles, Aratus had few carrots and sticks left to use.

Looking through the lens of Plutarch and Polybius, one tends to get a myopic picture of Achaean politics focused on Aratus. On numerous occasions, Polybius especially represents all major decisions spouting from Aratus' careful planning.²⁶⁵ This obscures the real political adversaries Aratus had within the League. The admission of

²⁶¹ Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 32.3. This pledged pension is in addition to promised, though never given, aid in the form of ships and men for the restoration of Cleomenes III's kingship. For the view that Cleomenes, despite giving his mother and wife as surety, did not depend much on Ptolemaic funds, see Thomas Africa, "Cleomenes III and the Helots," *California Studies in Classical Antiquity*, vol. 1 (1968), 3.

²⁶² Plutarch, *Aratus*, 34.4.

²⁶³ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 19.1.

²⁶⁴ Polybius, 2.47.2. This reason was in addition to his lifelong policy of opposing Macedonian influence. Walbank, *Commentary*, 245.

²⁶⁵ Polybius, 2.44.3, Aratus crows the tyrants, 2.45.6, despite all major powers arrayed against them, Aratus, wunderkind, foils all plots and snares, Plutarch, *Aratus*, 35.3, Aratus's opinion carries the day on Argive admission to the League, no matter how his opinion bends. Walbank, *Commentary*, 242, he argues against the veracity of alliance arrayed against the Achaeans referred to in Polybius 2.45.6.

the powerful poleis, Megalopolis and Argos, added new foreign policy imperatives and new leading statesmen to contest the policies of Aratus and Sicyon. Aratus could not tolerate any reduction in his influence, and these conflicts gave Cleomenes III the space to develop his domestic power.

A good indicator of the political division within the Achaean body politic is the very question of war with Sparta. Flatly speaking, Aratus did not want it.²⁶⁶ With the hindsight of the Cleomenean War and the problems the Achaean League continued to have with the Spartans, down through their defiant attack on Sparta in spite of Roman warnings, it is difficult to keep the perspective of earlier Achaean policy. In fact, Aratus was pro-Spartan. Although he controversially dismissed Agis IV when considering a battle against the Aetolians, the fact of Agis' presence points to an early alliance.²⁶⁷ Further, looking at his behavior, Aratus always chooses the less confrontational policy, even to the point of allowing the invading Cleomenes III to escape, so as to leave open the possibility of reconciliation.²⁶⁸ This lack of aggression strikes one as contrary to Aratus' nature. The prospect of war with Sparta was not distressing on its own. Aratus feared the authority it would grant his anti-Spartan rivals, who would and did take a leading role in directing the conflict. The whole Cleomenean War represented a fundamental failure on the part of Aratus to deescalate a tense situation.

The policy which most proves the extent of Aratus' marginalization is the request for Macedonian aid. If the introduction of the Megalopolitans, and their tyrant

²⁶⁶ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 35.4.

²⁶⁷ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 31.1.

²⁶⁸ Plutarch, *Aratus*, 35.5. The nonbattle of Pallantium probably had much to do with Aratan desire to deprive Aristomachus of glory, but on 37.1, before the walls of Megalopolis, Aratus, then *strategos*, only sallied to relieve the pressure on the walls, and refused a larger engagement. Lydiades attacked, and Aratus refused to support him, unto his death.

Lydiades, reoriented League policy against the Spartans, it also added an element of pro-Macedonian sentiment. Megalopolis had a generally positive history with the Macedonian kingdom, which extended to the support Megalopolitan tyrants received just before Lydiades joined the Achaeans.²⁶⁹ The addition of Argos, also somewhat pro-Macedonian and for similar reasons, created a block strong enough to overcome Aratus' objections, though not at all places and times. This latent bias was unimportant so long as the fortunes of the League continued to wax. With the serious reverses during the opening years of the Cleomenean War, this new fault in League politics became far more evident. As the war progressed, Aratus's influence continued to wane, even as his main rival, Lydiades, perished.

As the war effort worsened, the diehard anti-Spartans, particularly the hard pressed Megalopolitans, looked to outside succor. Plutarch and Polybius relate a notorious secret mission to Antigonus Doson, involving Aratus and his two Megalopolitan associates.²⁷⁰ It is generally taken to be a desperate act of a hard pressed statesman alarmed at the specter of social revolution. At closer scrutiny this picture does not add up. As has been discussed above, the notion that Aratus was alarmed at Cleomenes' social reforms is not clear cut. The machinations behind the embassy of Nicophanes and Cercidas are not clear cut either.

Polybius presents a deeply confused narrative with contradictory elements.²⁷¹ Most noteworthy is Aratus' supposed desire for the secrecy of the mission, and the public

²⁶⁹ Walbank, *Commentary*, 247.

²⁷⁰ Polybius, 2.48.1-7. and Plutarch, Cleomenes, 17.1. Walbank, 247-248.

²⁷¹ Erich Gruen, "Aratus and the Achaean Alliance with Macedon," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* vol. 21, no. 4 (4th Qtr., 1972), 616. This line of reasoning is taken directly from here, and while the proposition is contrary to the general understanding of Aratus's role in this decision, I find Gruen compelling, and representing a more coherent narrative, especially if one reduces the specter of social revolution, as I advocate. Walbank, *Commentary*, 247 for the traditional view. Shipley, *The Greek World*

request for permission from the League by the Megalopolitans.²⁷² When one disentangles the obviously public aspects of the appeal from the supposedly backroom planning, a very different, and more consistent, picture emerges. The Megalopolitans, frustrated with the unrelenting Spartan attacks, which the Achaeans failed to prevent, or ameliorate, officially send a mission to Antigonus Doson. They requested League permission, which was granted, and they received a favorable reply from the king. The Achaean assembly was prepared to accept the assistance, but Aratus, whose staunch, lifelong policy had been opposition to Macedonian influence, delivered a speech against the aid. He asserted that it is better to rely on one's own strength than to call in another, and only at the last extremity should such assistance be sought.²⁷³ Aratus carried the argument for that day.

The record of Aratan duplicity, and quiet diplomacy with the Macedonian court, can only have one source. Polybius himself notes that Aratus left these dealings out of his memoirs, because his plans were such closely guarded secrets that he had "to do and say things quite contrary to his real intentions."²⁷⁴ The alternative view is that Aratus held no such plan, but the concept of the wily Sicyonian influencing behind the scenes fit all too well with the narratives of one historian. Phylarchus, the pro-Cleomenes III writer, is the probable source of the Aratan duplicity. Since Aratus is his great villain, Phylarchus found it easy to believe, and hence write, that there was a long term plan to

After Alexander, 145 for a skeptical reading of Cleomenes' social convictions, but a traditional view on Aratus' negotiations with Antigonus Doson.

²⁷² Polybius, 2.47.9 on the decision for the mission to be secret, 2.48.6-8 on their very public dispatch and League request.

²⁷³ Polybius, 2.50.11. Walbank, *Commentary*, 249-250.

²⁷⁴ Polybius, 2.47.10-11. Walbank, *Commentary*, 247.

reintroduce barbarous rule into the Peloponnese, cheating the virtuous and Hellenic Cleomenes III.²⁷⁵ Plutarch preserves some of the invective in his life of Cleomenes.²⁷⁶

One would think that Polybius would reject the anti-Aratus slant which this story possessed, but within the context of Polybius' other remarks, he transforms the alliance machinations into the perfect vehicle for his conception of a correct Achaean world view. Far from betraying Greece, Aratus secured true liberty and constitutional rule against the tyrannical Cleomenes.²⁷⁷ Antigonos Doson is consistently portrayed as a positive monarch, and his cooperation with Aratus perfectly foreshadows the greater partnership in pursuit of liberty, with the Romans.²⁷⁸ But just because Polybius found this narrative useful and fitting for his conception of Achaean history, does not affirm that Aratus actually followed a long term policy of rapprochement with Antigonid Macedonia.

At every stage, including the first speech against outside aid, Aratus searched for an alternative to Macedonian aid. It was only after the total collapse of the Achaean position that he relented and gave his full blessing to the pact. When confronted with his volte-face, Aratus declared that he was merely following necessity.²⁷⁹ He had been outmaneuvered at the start of the war, and Cleomenes' unwillingness to reach a settlement forced his hand even further. In the end, it was not some great fear of social upheaval which compelled Aratus to submit to Macedonian suzerainty; it was in order to avoid political irrelevance that he threw himself behind the alliance. Aratus refused to relinquish his position as leading statesman, even at the cost of his anti-Macedonian convictions.

²⁷⁵ Gruen, "Aratus and Macedon," 618.

²⁷⁶ Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 16.1-5.

²⁷⁷ He was tyrannical for usurping his royal colleague and murdering the ephors.

²⁷⁸ Erich Gruen, "Aratus and Macedon," 619.

²⁷⁹ *Ἀναγκή*, Plutarch, *Aratus*, 43.2.

What Cleomenes III exposed was that the Achaean League was not a grand federation, bound by common justice and humanity, but closer to an alliance of convenience between ethnic Achaeans, Aratus of Sicyon and all the other Peloponnesian tyrants. As the situation deteriorated, the sources speak of poleis surrendering to Cleomenes III. But just as their tyrants had joined their poleis to the Achaeans, it was these same men who in turn surrendered their walls to the Spartans. Men such as Xenon, tyrant of Hermione, and Cleonymus, tyrant of Phlius saw the direction the wind was blowing and jumped ship. Given the circumstances, no polis outside of Achaea was safe. Even Megalopolis likely only remained committed to the League on account of its intense rivalry with Sparta.

The Achaeans incorporated many poleis, including the powerful centers of Megalopolis and Argos, only on the basis of elite co-option. This sudden expansion did not allow for any kind of close feeling to develop between the various poleis citizenries. After many more decades of common government, such fellow feeling must have developed, for Polybius expounds its ideals so eloquently. Unfortunately, the independent political organization known as the Achaean League failed to inspire enough loyalty to see it through its first major crisis.

Aftermath and Refocusing

The strategies of unity employed by Aratus had failed their trial by fire. Cleomenes III had exposed the Achaean League's fundamental lack of a cohesive and collective identity. The tactics of elite co-option which had worked so well in the expansion of the League had displaced the very force which made those tactics so

successful. In the aftermath of the Cleomenean War, the Achaean League continued to exist under the protective aegis of Macedon. This support was almost immediately tested again during the so-called Social War. The League suffered further setbacks but ultimately succeeded with Macedonian support. Over the following decades Achaea slowly clawed its way back into a stable and prosperous position. Such efforts were aided by near constant Macedonian military support as the League reached its lowest ebb militarily.

Aratus of Sicyon was indisputably both the catalyst and cause of the expansion of the Achaean League. His strategies dovetailed with the tyrannical zeitgeist in the Peloponnese. But as the situation evolved, largely stemming from Aratus' own actions, the Aratan strategies ceased to be a reliable force for stability. From this point onward, the unifying institutions within the Achaean system moved into greater prominence.

Among these Achaean institutions, the military must again take pride of place. As always, the coercive power of martial force bound people to the central government should loyalty prove fickle, as it did for many League members. The performance of the army continued to deteriorate under the leadership of Aratus. Opportunities for surprise attacks faded, and pitched battles predominated. The battle of Caphyae, the first engagement of the Social War, ended in disaster.²⁸⁰ Events got so out of hand that there was a tax strike.²⁸¹ This performance would continue into the First Macedonian War until the death of Aratus and the rise of Philopoemen. In each case, as the League neared military collapse, Macedonia would again step in and restore the situation.

²⁸⁰Polybius, 4.11-12. Walbank, *Commentary I*, 458-460.

²⁸¹Polybius, 4.60.4, Walbank, *Commentary I*, 514.

The vicissitudes of Philopoemen's life are unimportant here, but he engineered a complete reorganization of the old Achaean army. The tactics that had worked so well for Aratus a generation before had long since lost their purpose. Philopoemen is recorded as having discarded the light thyrsos shields and javelins. He exchanged them for the equipment of the heavy phalanx: full panoply with a heavy shield and the *sarisa*.²⁸² This reorganization occurred with the full support of Philip V, whose resources were constantly drained in protecting a vulnerable Achaean League.

The significance of this step was complex. Beyond the political implications of a state better able to protect itself, this reorganization had an effect upon the loyalty the state could call upon. Philopoemen, through whatever personal charisma and authority he possessed, forced the citizen levy to train for months before trying them in battle. After traveling city to city, Philopoemen assembled all the levies at one location for a final round of training.²⁸³ This bred an esprit de corps which was sealed by the victory over the Spartan tyrant Machanidas. National victories tend to swell national pride, and loyalty to the federal government must have increased. Men from the citizen levies, drawn from the propertied citizens, would feel a greater sense of united effort and accomplishment. This rebirth of effective martial prowess was conducted under the aegis of Macedonian protection.

Military victory has long formed a crucial path to legitimacy for states and statesmen. Most modern nation states point to a historical victory, or in rare cases glorious defeat,²⁸⁴ as an example of national prowess and greatness. The many "Achaean" citizens, who mostly thought of themselves as Megalopolitans, Argives or

²⁸²Plutarch, *Philopoemen*, 9.1-3. Pausanias, 8.50.1, who describes the shields as "Argive."

²⁸³Polybius, 11.10.8. Walbank, *Commentary II*, 282.

²⁸⁴Such as Serbian memory of the Battle of Kosovo.

whichever polis one might name, were far from a modern nation. But they were one political community, and they had a narrative of their growth and prosperity. Polybius and his work represent an iteration of that narrative. In the early League, the seizure of the Acrocorinth played a central role in another iteration of that narrative. The results of the Cleomenean War must have upended this understanding of Achaean identity, with Corinth returned to Macedonia. Its achievement was literally thrown down when Antigonus Doson had the statues of captors of the Acrocorinth in Argos destroyed, all but Aratus', and put up those of the former tyrants instead.²⁸⁵ The poor showing during the Social War must have further depressed any patriotic feelings. After nearly twenty years of disappointment, the victory over the by now decades long enemy, Sparta, in 207 BCE came as a startling change for the better. Held in the protective embrace of Macedonia, the Achaean League had the time to rejuvenate and forge a better military force. The new army developed by Philopoemen would continue to perform well for over a generation, standing as a source of pride and national unity.

The period of Macedonian support provided the space for the League to move toward constitutional changes which began to broaden the possibilities for political connections. Two changes are noted before the second Macedonian War in 200 BCE. One change was important, but only to military effectiveness. The annual elections ceased to be held in the spring, and instead took place in the fall, thus eliminating that lag time between the start of campaign season and the installation of a new *strategos*.²⁸⁶ The second, and more consequential, change was the move to assemble the full *ekklesia* for

²⁸⁵Plutarch, *Aratus*, 45.3.

²⁸⁶Polybius, 11.10.9, since Philopoemen had eight months to train his forces before the spring muster of 207, so he must have taken his office in the fall. Walbank, *Commentary II*, 282.

extraordinary meetings to determine war and alliances only.²⁸⁷ The *boule* would continue to meet regularly. This change, theoretically radical in scope, aided in the balancing of League geography. Formally, geographically close poleis could fill the *ekklesia* with their own citizens, giving them a greater share of the votes. But with a regulated amount of councilors, all of them with the means to travel, the legislative branch of the Achaean League gained a balanced prospective. This change also applied to the election of state officers, such as the *strategos autokrator*.²⁸⁸

There was one final constitutional change with the obvious intent of including more outlying poleis into the political process. Philopoemen, leading citizen of Megalopolis, pushed through a measure in 188 BCE to rotate the meeting site of the regular *boule* sessions.²⁸⁹ This change, brought about by an Arcadian after the death of Aratus, demonstrated that the weight of power had shifted away from the old centers. The law had finally changed to incorporate that fact. Though this lessened the importance of the capital at Aegium, this does not necessarily mean that the city ceased all functions as a capital.

Beyond the political changes, the growing utility of the economic and civic rights enjoyed by all League citizens was of incalculable importance. As the decades progressed, regardless of constitutional changes, citizens of one polis began to move to economically more advantageous localities. As much as any other factor, these rights broadened League support, as more citizens joined in the prosperity which the League engendered. Unfortunately, details of this process are few, and its influence can be

²⁸⁷ Polybius, 22.10.10-12, for a meeting which took place in 185. This practice must have occurred well before then, however, Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 224.

²⁸⁸ Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 225.

²⁸⁹ R. M. Errington, *Philopoemen*, (Oxford: 1969), 139.

observed in only a few places. The most striking example of the greater mobility in economic and political life comes from a casualty list. Preserved from Epidaurus, it includes the names of one hundred fifty six soldiers. Only fifty three are classed as Epidaurians, while the others are termed either Achaeans or other residents.²⁹⁰ Far more Achaean citizens enjoyed the fruits of association, and the League began to exert a far greater hold on them. Unfortunately this occurred only after the League had placed itself under the dominion of Macedonia, and then Rome.

One of the few areas which hint at the long term viability of the greater Achaean identity is the prestige of the religious cult to Zeus Homarius. The few scraps of evidence for the continued worship of the federal cult were admirably assembled by the late F. W. Walbank.²⁹¹ Archaeologists have found a stele which included the figures of Zeus Homarius and Athena Homaria in the Nile Delta, likely set by an Achaean mercenary.²⁹² This attestation of personal devotion reveals individual loyalty, long after the League had lost all political relevance. At the group level a number of northern Greek *ethne* plus the original Achaeans joined together in a league. The membership and name of this league fluctuated, but a dedication exists thanking the Roman Emperor Nero for their liberty. The appellation of this League was Pan-Achaean, demonstrating the continued cache of this label. Another inscription to T. Statilius Timocrates celebrates the Pan-Achaean games, and made provision to set up an inscription at the Asclepion in Epidaurus, and the Homarion.²⁹³ This Pan-Achaean League clearly retained some sense of continuity with the Hellenistic Achaean League. The passage of time in addition to the

²⁹⁰Larsen, *Greek Federal States*, 239.

²⁹¹F. W. Walbank, "Hellenes and Achaeans: 'Greek Nationality' Revisited," *Polybius, Rome, and the Hellenistic World Essays and Reflections*, (New York: 2002).

²⁹²Walbank, *Essays and Reflections*, 148-9.

²⁹³Walbank, *Essays and Reflections*, 150.

broadened support among its citizens ensured that the Achaean legacy did not perish with Roman subjugation.

CONCLUSION

The Achaean League arose within a favorable confluence of events, from which the Achaean *ethnos* especially benefited. The League rose to regional prominence, uniting many of the fractious poleis of the Peloponnesus. Contrary to its own narrative, the Achaean League did not attract these various poleis through the shining example provided in an equal democratic government. A ruthless exploitation of the prevailing political climate delivered profound early growth. Under the leadership of Aratus, the Achaeans targeted tyrants who were established through Macedonian force and an explosion of royally distributed specie. This system could only continue its growth so long as the conditions remained the same. But as Aratus confronted more consensual political systems and a resurgent power in Sparta, the League collapsed. Propped up by Macedonian force yet again, the League developed in its cocoon for several more generations. It finally garnered the unity and legitimacy in the years after the Cleomenean War, but by this point the might of Rome was too powerful for any Hellenic state to resist.

Achaean succeeded in the first place because, unlike most other ethnic federations, it was not opposed to accepting nonethnic members. The key was twofold: first, the Hellenic world experienced stratification in its ruling elite, so much of the important decisions were taken by a single individual, a tyrant. Second was the emergence of a

tyrant over a relatively powerful polis which was willing to hand over its full autonomy. Sicyon, with its own ethnically conflicted history, supplied the Achaeans with a catalyst and a statesman to flood past its ethnic borders. Though less impressive than their later exploits, the admission of Sicyon to the League was the most consequential decision taken by the Achaean *ethnos*.

Under the leadership of Aratus, the League rapidly expanded through a direct targeting of Macedonian backed tyrants. The crafty Achaean army was a threat to every tyrant in the region, in addition to the covert assassination attempts instigated Aratus. But the benefits of access to the greater patronage resources of the League proved highly enticing to lesser tyrants. The ultimate prize was the position of *strategos autokrator*, which only the tyrants of Sicyon, Argos and Megalopolis attained. The co-option of this tyrannical elite brought rapid growth, but also left the League vulnerable. Through the jealous competition of Aratus, Lydiades and Aristomachus, the League failed to adequately defend itself.

Cleomenes III exposed the Achaean League as a fragile political construct. The early years saw his Achaean enemies divided in their policy toward him, granting the Spartans important victories. With his domestic situation solidified through foreign victory, Cleomenes III challenged the League more effectively. This led to the collapse of the League, and the defection of most of its member states. With nothing but selfish motivations holding the federation together, the League failed its first major challenge in spectacular fashion. Only the return of Macedonian hegemony allowed the League to continue in a reduced capacity.

Despite the loss of foreign policy independence, the Achaean League continued to mature and grow. Its novel approach to League citizenship and the constitutional changes spread the benefits of the League to a broader swath of the citizenry. The decades of continued existence garnered a degree of loyalty great enough to survive catastrophe. The complete end of Achaean political importance was not accompanied by total irrelevance as in the case of many other regional associations. Into the Roman period, ethnic Achaeans and other Hellenes looked back nostalgically to the glory and prosperity of the Achaean League.

APPENDIX

Sources

The Achaean League is fairly well documented, particularly after the addition of Sicyon to the League. The principal sources are Polybius, Plutarch and Pausanias, with additional information contained in various other classical authors, epigraphy and numismatics.

Polybius

Polybius serves as the primary source for the Achaean League. As a League citizen who operated in the highest circles of the League, he was well placed to understand the internal workings of the League, as well as the policy and self-image of the League's leading statesmen. A Megalopolitan by birth, Polybius came of age after the death of the leading statesman, Aratus of Sicyon, during the time when fellow Megalopolitan Philopoemen dominated league circles. His father, Lycortus, was a strong supporter of Philopoemen and propounded the view that Achaea ought to maintain its independence from Rome, following the letter of the law regarding treaty obligations and no further.²⁹⁴

Born sometime around 200 BCE, Polybius stands as the closest ancient writer to the events he describes. In 182 BCE, Polybius received the distinct honor to carry

²⁹⁴ Walbank, *Polybius*, (Los Angeles: 1972), 8

Philopoemen's ashes during his funeral procession.²⁹⁵ It was in the context of the great general's death that the Achaeans elected Lycortus to the highest federal position, *strategos*. Polybius, himself, later attained the second highest position, *hipparchos*, just before the outbreak of the Third Macedonian War. It was in the aftermath of this struggle that Rome found the Achaean League's neutrality too hostile, and deported one thousand leading Achaeans to Italy, including Polybius. This exile, though interrupting a promising political career, has forever enriched the understanding of this period. In his newly acquired leisure, Polybius turned his attention to preserving what he considered the momentous changes of his day.

His biography aside, Polybius was a complex and serious historian. His stated purpose is to explain the rapid rise of the Romans, both the means and the system under which it occurred.²⁹⁶ The implicit purpose is to explain to a Greek audience how to operate in a political environment totally dominated by Rome.²⁹⁷ The *Histories* are organized to incorporate all of the major political events in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds starting in 220 BCE.²⁹⁸ Later ancient historians refer to his work as the best source for the times he covers.²⁹⁹

He has certain biases, however, which have become axiomatic. Polybius, the Achaean from Megalopolis, takes special pride in his polis, and his *koinon*. Though they are not the main focus of his history, he sets aside much space to detail Achaean early history. The other side of this coin is that he clearly dislikes his fatherland's enemies, the Aetolians and the Spartans. Viewing the wider Mediterranean, Polybius generally favors

²⁹⁵ Plutarch, *Philopoemen*, 21.3.

²⁹⁶ Polybius, 1.1.1-6.

²⁹⁷ Walbank, *Polybius*, 27.

²⁹⁸ Polybius, 3.2.1-5.

²⁹⁹ Livy, 30.45. Conveying great respect through litotes.

the Romans, but does not go out of his way to condemn their enemies, the Carthaginians and the Hellenistic monarchies. Further, Polybius was also an aristocrat. While praising his homeland as a democracy, Polybius has a dim view of the proponents of the radical democracy represented by classical Athens.³⁰⁰

As an Achaean patriot, Polybius was the only writer to discuss the reformation of the Achaean League; all other accounts follow his outline. His sources regarding early Achaean history were first and foremost the *Memoirs* of Aratus.³⁰¹ Otherwise he had local traditions and interviews with participants for the years after 220 BCE. One important aspect to note is that due to his deep familiarity with the Achaean government, Polybius often leaves out aspects of the federal system the knowledge of which he takes for granted. Altogether his work remains the premier source of material for the Achaean League.

Plutarch

This Boeotian aristocrat and priest relays much highly useful information through his famous *Parallel Lives*. The *Lives* of Aratus, Philopoemen and Cleomenes III most aid the understanding of this period, but references in several other *Lives* flesh out odd bits of Achaean history. Writing in the late first century of the Common Era, Plutarch lived during the heyday of the Roman Empire. Though a competent historian, his stated purpose is not history but the exploration of the lives of his subjects.³⁰² As such, he crafts his narratives to demonstrate moral failings and virtues. Through the vagaries of

³⁰⁰Polybius, 6.44.3-5.

³⁰¹Walbank, *Polybius*, 42. Polybius, 2.47.11, where he directly references them.

³⁰²Plutarch, *Alexander*, 1.2.

transmission, however, Plutarch remains the chief source for a number of leading statesmen, and the period in which they lived.

As an historian living years after most of the men he described, Plutarch culled his material from preexisting sources. He editorializes, but typically takes cues from his primary source concerning a given life. This development is most striking in his contrasting treatment of Aratus and Cleomenes III in their respective lives. For the *Aratus*, Plutarch clearly follows the *Memoirs* or Aratus himself. He does chide him for letting in the barbarian Macedonians, but only for a brief paragraph.³⁰³ In the *Cleomenes*, however, Plutarch attacks Aratus more thoroughly, and attributes vanity and jealousy to his policies.³⁰⁴ The chief source from which Plutarch drew these conclusions was the pro-Cleomenean historian Phylarchus.³⁰⁵

The biographies of Hellenistic Greeks seem to be more of an afterthought to Plutarch compared to their Classical counterparts. In the rest of his work, the *Moralia*, references to Classical Greeks and their paired Romans far outnumber the Hellenistic pairings.³⁰⁶ The Classical period biographies required greater care in composition, since every educated Greek had an intimacy with that subject matter. By contrast, interest in Hellenistic history and figures had waned considerably in Plutarch's period. He comments in his biography of Aemilius Paulus that he started his *Lives* for others, but continued them for himself.³⁰⁷ This continuation most likely contained all of the Hellenistic subjects, which were not in vogue. These circumstances allowed for greater

³⁰³Plutarch, *Aratus*, 38.4.

³⁰⁴Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 16.1-6.

³⁰⁵Gruen, "Aratus and Macedon," 618.

³⁰⁶Geiger, "Plutarch: Choice of Heroes," 92-93.

³⁰⁷Plutarch, *Aemilius*, 1.1.

flexibility in those biographies, since fewer Greeks had a firm stance on how those men should be conveyed.

Pausanias

The *Periegesis* of Pausanias is a valuable and unique work which sheds different insights into many obscure regions of Greece. Beginning in Athens, Pausanias “travels” to all of the regions of Hellas, describing the local sites and stories. His work has long been mined for stray comments which fill in important facts. There has been a movement to examine Pausanias on his own terms, writing a particularly vivid work which is about travel and yet more.³⁰⁸ His methods involve visiting the sites he describes and inquiring about local histories and stories associated with those sites. His sections on Achaea, Sicyon and parts of Arcadia reveal important pieces of information.

Generally, however, Pausanias relates few genuinely independent pieces of information. And what does exist is often presented without a regard for chronology. For example, Pausanias records a battle fought near Megalopolis between the allied Megalopolitans, Achaeans and Sicyonians under Aratus on the one hand, and the Spartans under King Agis on the other. It remains unclear when exactly this battle occurred and even if it ever did. There are many plausible theories, but no definitive answers.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸Susan E Alcock, John F. Cherry and Jas Elsner, *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece* (New York: 2001), 3.

³⁰⁹Walbank, *Aratos*, 36 for many of those theories.

Numismatics

The nature of Achaean coinage prevents it from filling in much historical data, but it does demonstrate an official show of unity among League constituents. This even extended to poleis forced into the League, such as Sparta. The League used a modified Aeginan weight standard, which was traditional in many parts of the Peloponnese. This contrasted with much of the rest of the Hellenistic world, which generally used the Attic standard, with the large exception of Rhodes, which maintained its own standard, befitting that economic powerhouse.³¹⁰ The reverse of the League coins in these examples contained both the League monogram and a local symbol. The League generally struck silver coins, but some bronze coinage has been discovered.³¹¹ The coins below represent poleis from different regions.



SNG Vol: VI 760 Fitzwilliam Museum

State: Achaea Mint: Corinth

Obverse Description: Laureate head of Zeus l. Reverse Description: League monogram in olive wreath; above, Pegasus.

Period: First half of 2nd cent -200 -150

³¹⁰William Metcalf, *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage*, (Oxford: 2012) 193-194.

³¹¹Jennifer Warren, *Bronze Coinage of the Achaean League*, 154.

Struck Silver Hemidrachm

ID: SNGuk_0601_0760



SNG Vol: VII 1088 Manchester University Museum

State: Achaia Mint: Patras

Obverse Description: Zeus laur. Reverse Description: League monogram in olive wreath; below, dolphin.

Reverse Inscription: PA – A, Reverse Secondary Inscription: LX

Period: First half of 2nd cent -200 -150

Struck Silver Triobol Weight

ID: SNGuk_0700_1088



SNG Vol: VII 1089 Manchester University Museum

State: Achaia Mint: Sicyon

Obverse Description: Zeus laur. Reverse Description: League monogram in olive wreath; below, dove.

Reverse Inscription: N - I

Period: First half of 2nd cent -200 -150

Struck Silver Triobol

Reference:

Title: The Agrinion Hoard Type: Monograph Auth/Ed: Thompson, M. Publisher: ANS

Publication Place: New York Publication Year: 1968 Cat. No: 586 ff.

ID: SNGuk_0700_1089



SNG Vol: VII 1090 Manchester University Museum

State: Achaea Mint: Sparta

Obverse Description: Zeus laur. Reverse Description: League monogram in olive wreath; to left and right, Dioscuri caps.

Reverse Inscription: ΛΑ

Period: First half of 2nd cent -200 -150

Struck Silver Triobol Weight: 2.2

Reference:

Title: The Agrinion Hoard Type: Monograph Auth/Ed: Thompson, M. Publisher: ANS

Publication Place: New York Publication Year: 1968 Cat. No: 468

ID: SNGuk_0700_1090

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